

A NEW

SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

EDITED BY R. H. HORNE,

AUTHOR OF "ORION," "GREGORY VII.," &c., &c.

"It is an easy thing to praise or blame ;
The hard task, and the virtue, to do both."

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Inscribed

TO

JAMES F. FERRIER, ESQ.,

PROFESSOR OF UNIVERSAL HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

A SLIGHT TOKEN OF GRATITUDE FOR CANDID CRITICISM,
AND OF RESPECT FOR ENLIGHTENED ERUDITION.

LONDON, *October 12th*, 1843

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PREFACE.

NEARLY twenty years have now elapsed since the publication of Hazlitt's "Spirit of the Age," and a new set of men, several of them animated by a new spirit, have obtained eminent positions in the public mind.

Of those selected by Hazlitt, three are introduced in the present publication, and two also of those who appeared in the "Authors of England," for reasons which will be apparent in the papers relating to them. With these exceptions, our selection has not been made from those who are already "crowned," and their claims settled, but almost entirely from those who are in progress and midway of fame.

It has been throughout a matter of deep regret to the editor, more keenly felt as the work drew towards its conclusion, that he found himself compelled to omit several names which should have been included; not merely of authors who, like himself, belong only to the last ten or fifteen years, but of veterans in the field of literature, who have not been duly estimated in collections of this kind. Inability to find sufficient space is one of the chief causes; in some cases, however, the omission is attributable to a difficulty of classification, or the perplexity induced by a versatility of talents in the same individual. In some cases, also, names honoured in literature could not be introduced without entering into the discussion of questions of a nature not well suited to a work of this kind—or, rather, to this division of a possible series—yet

with which great questions their names are identified.

The selection, therefore, which it has been thought most advisable to adopt, has been the names of those most eminent in general literature, and representing most extensively the Spirit of the Age ; and the names of two individuals, who, in this work, represent those philanthropic principles now influencing the minds and moral feelings of all the first intellects of the time. Sufficient cause will be apparent in the respective articles for the one or two other exceptions.

For most of the omissions, however, one remedy alone remains. The present work, though complete in itself, forms only the inaugural part of a projected series, the continuation of which will probably depend upon the reception of this first main division, which, in any case, may be regarded as the centre of the whole.

Should the design of the projectors be fully carried out, it will comprise the "Political Spirit of the Age," in which, of course, the leading men of all parties will be included ; the "Scientific Spirit of the Age," including those who most conspicuously represent the strikingly opposite classes of discovery or development, &c. ; the "Artistical Spirit of the Age," including the principal painters, sculptors, musical composers, architects, and engravers of the time, with such reference to the theatres and concert-rooms as may be deemed necessary ; and the "Historical, Biographical, and Critical Spirit of the Age."

But more than all, the editor regrets that he could afford no sufficient space for an examination of the books for children, which must be regarded as exercising so great and lasting an influence upon the mind and future life. He is well

assured, while admiring a few excellent works like those of Mrs. Marcet and Mary Howitt, that there are innumerable books for children, the sale of which is enormous, as the influence of them is of the most injurious character. But this could only be appropriately dealt with under the head of Education.

It will readily be understood that the present volume refers simply to our own country, and (with one exception) to those now living. In the biographical sketches, which are only occasional, the editor has carefully excluded all disagreeable personalities, and all unwarrantable anecdotes. The criticisms are entirely on abstract grounds.

There is one peculiarity in the critical opinions expressed in this volume: it is that they are never balanced and equivocal, or evasive of decision on the whole. Where the writer doubts his own judgment, he says so; but in all cases, the reader will never be in doubt as to what the critic really means to say. The editor, before commencing this labour, confesses to the weakness of having deliberated with himself a good half hour as to whether he should "try to please everybody;" but the result was that he determined to try and please one person only. It may seem a bad thing to acknowledge, but that one was "himself." The pleasure he expected to derive, was from the conviction of having fully spoken out what he felt to be the Truth; and in the pleasure of this consciousness he is not disappointed. His chief anxiety now is (and more particularly, of course, with respect to those articles which have been written by himself), that the reader should never mistake the self-confidence of the critic for arrogance, or the presumptuous tone of assumed superiority, which are so revolting; but

solely attribute it to his strong feeling of conviction, and a belief that he clearly sees the truth of the matter in question. There is no other feeling in it. He may be often wrong, but it is with a clear conscience.

The editor having contributed to several quarterly journals during the last seven or eight years, has transferred a few passages into the pages of this work concerning writers whose peculiar genius he had exclusive leisure to study some time since, and has been unwilling to say the same things in other words. But these passages occur in two articles only.

For valuable assistance and advice from several eminent individuals, the editor begs to return his grateful thanks. It will be sufficiently apparent that several hands are in the work.

R. H. H.

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CHARLES DICKENS.

"One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin."

"Hunger does not preside over this day," replied the Cook, "thanks be to Camacho the Rich. Alight, and see if thou canst find anywhere a ladle, and skim out a fowl or two, and much good may it do thy good heart." "*I see none!*" answered Sancho. "Stay," quoth the Cook. "God forgive me, *what a nice and good-for-nothing fellow must you be!*" So saying, he laid hold of a kettle, and sousing it at once into one of the half jar-pots, he fished out three pullets and a couple of geese. . . . "I have nothing to put it in!" answered Sancho. "Then take ladle and all," replied the Cook, "for Camacho's riches and felicity are sufficient to supply everything."—DON QUIXOTE, Part ii. Book ii. Cap. 3.

IF an extensive experience and knowledge of the world be certain in most cases to render a man suspicious, full of doubts and incredulities, equally certain is it that with other men such experience and such knowledge exercise this influence at rare intervals only, or in a far less degree; while in some respects the influence even acts in a directly opposite way, and the extraordinary things they have seen or suffered, cause them to be very credulous and of open-armed faith to embrace strange novelties. They are not startled at the sound of fresh wonders in the moral or physical world—they laugh at no feasible theory, and can see truth through the refractions of paradox and contradictory extremes. They *know* that there are more things in heaven and on the earth than in "your philosophy." They observe the fables and the visions of one age, become the facts and practices of a succeeding age—perhaps even of a few years after their first announcement, and before the world has done laughing: they are slow to declare any character or action to be unnatural, having so often witnessed some of the extreme lights and shadows which flit upon the outskirts of Nature's capacious circle, and have perhaps themselves been made to feel the bitter reality of various classes of anomaly previously unaccountable, if not incredible. They have discovered that in matters of practical conduct a greater blunder cannot in general be made, than to "judge of others by yourself," or what you think, feel, and fancy of yourself. But having found out that the world is not "all alike," though like enough for the charities of real life, they

identify themselves with other individualities, then search within for every actual and imaginary resemblance to the great majority of their fellow-creatures, which may give them a more intimate knowledge of aggregate nature, and thus enlarge the bounds of unexclusive sympathy.

To men of this genial habit and maturity of mind, if also they have an observing eye for externals, there is usually a very tardy admission of the alleged madness of a picture of scenery, or the supposed grossness of a caricature of the human countenance. The traveller and the voyager, who has, moreover, an eye for art, has often seen enough to convince him that the genius of Turner and Martin has its foundation not only in elemental but in actual truth; nor could such an observer go into any large concourse of people (especially of the poorer classes, where the unsuppressed character has been suffered to rise completely to the surface) without seeing several faces, which, by the addition of the vices of social man, might cause many a dumb animal to feel indignant at the undoubtedly deteriorated resemblance. The curse of evil circumstances acting upon the "third and fourth generations," when added to the "sins of the fathers," can and does turn the lost face of humanity into something worse than brutish. As with the face, so is it with the character of mankind; nothing can be too lofty, too noble, too lovely to be natural; nor can anything be too vicious, too brutalized, too mean, or too ridiculous. It is observable, however, that there are many degrees and fine shades in these frequent degradations of man to the mere animal. Occasionally they are no degradation, but rather an advantage, as a falcon eye, or a lion-brow, will strikingly attest. But more generally the effect is either gravely humorous, or grotesquely comic; and in these cases the dumb original is not complimented. For, you may see a man with a bull's forehead and neck, and a mean grovelling countenance (while that of the bull is physically grand and high-purposed), and the dog, the sheep, the bird, and the ape in all their varieties, are often seen with such admixtures as are really no advantage. Several times in an individual's life he may meet in the actual world with most of the best and worst kind of faces and characters of the world of fiction. It is true that there are not to be found a whole tribe of Quilps and Quasimodos,

(you would not *wish* it ?) but once in the life of the student of character he may have a glimpse of just such a creature ; and that, methinks, were quite familiar proof enough both for nature and art. Those who have exclusively portrayed the pure ideal in grandeur or beauty, and those also who have exclusively, or chiefly, portrayed monstrosities and absurdities, have been recluse men, who drew with an inward eye, and copied from their imaginations : the men who have given us the largest amount of truth under the greatest variety of forms, have always been those who went abroad into the world in all its ways ; and in the works of such men will always be found those touches of nature which can only be copied at first-hand, and the extremes of which originalities are never unnaturally exceeded. There are no caricatures in the portraits of Hogarth, nor are there any in those of Dickens. The most striking thing in both, is their apparently inexhaustible variety and truth of character.

Charles Lamb, in his masterly essay " On the Genius of Hogarth," says, that in the print of the " Election Dinner," there are more than thirty distinct classes of face, all in one room, and disposed in a natural manner, and all partaking in the spirit of the scene. The uproarious fun and comic disasters in the picture of " Chairing the Member ;" the fantastic glee and revelries of " Southwark Fair ;" the irony and farcical confusion of the " March to Finchley ;" the ludicrous and voluble pertinacities of the " Enraged Musician ;" and the rich humours of " Beer Street," in every one, and every part of which pictures, there is character and characteristic thought or action, are well known to all the numerous class of Hogarth's admirers. How very like they are to many scenes in the works of Dickens, not substantially nor in particular details, but in moral purpose and finished execution of parts, and of the whole, must surely have been often observed. The resemblance is apparent with regard to single figures and to separate groups—all with different objects, and often in conflict with the rest—and equally apparent with relation to one distinct and never-to-be-mistaken whole into which the various figures and groups are fused, and over which one general and harmonizing atmosphere expands, not by any apparent intention in the skilful hand of the artist, but as if exhaled from and sustained by the natural vitality of the scene.

But the comic humour for which these two great masters of character are most popularly known, constitutes a part only of their genius, and certainly not the highest part. Both possess tragic power—not at all in the ideal world, nor yet to be regarded as mere harsh, unredeemed matter-of-fact reality—but of the profoundest order. Mingled with their graphic tendencies to portray absurdity and ugliness, both display a love for the beautiful, and the pathetic. In the latter respect more especially, Mr. Dickens greatly excels; and two or three of his scenes, and numerous incidental touches, have never been surpassed, if the heart-felt tears of tens of thousands of readers are any test of natural pathos. But although their tragic power is so great, it is curious to observe that neither Hogarth nor Dickens has ever portrayed a tragic character, in the higher or more essential sense of the term. The individual whose bounding emotions and tone of thought are in an habitual state of passionate elevation, and whose aims and objects, if actually attainable, are still, to a great extent, idealized by the glowing atmosphere of his imagination, and a high-charged temperament—such a character, which is always ready to meet a tragic result half-way, if not to produce it, finds no place in the works of either. In their works no one dies for a noble purpose, nor for an abstract passion. There is no walking to execution, or to a premature grave by any other means, with a lofty air of conscious right, and for some great soul-felt truth—no apprehension for a capital crime in which there is a noble bearing or exultation—no death-bed of greatness in resignation and contentment for the cause—for there is no great cause at stake. Their tragedy is the constant tragedy of private life—especially with the poorer classes. They choose a man or woman for this purpose, with sufficient strength of body and will, and for the most part vicious and depraved; they place them in just the right sort of desperate circumstances which will ripen their previous character to its disastrous end; and they then leave the practical forces of nature and society to finish the story. Most truly, and fearfully, and morally, is it all done—or, rather, it all seems to happen, and we read it as a fac-simile, or a most faithful chronicle. Their heroes are without any tragic principle or purpose in themselves; they never tempt their fate or run upon

destruction, but rush away from it, evade, dodge, hide, fight, wrestle, tear and scream at it as a downright horror, and finally die because they absolutely cannot help it. This is shown or implied in most of the violent deaths which occur in the works of these two inventive geniuses.

The tragic force, and deep moral warnings, contained in several of the finest works of Hogarth, have been fully recognized by a few great writers, but are not yet recognized sufficiently by the popular sense. But even some of his pictures, which are deservedly among the least popular, from the revolting nature of their subject or treatment, do yet, for the most part, contain manifestations of his great genius. Of this class are the pictures on the "Progress of Cruelty:" but who will deny the terrific truth of the last but one of the series? The cruel boy, grown up to cruel manhood, has murdered his mistress, apparently to avoid the trouble attending her being about to become a mother. He has cut her throat at night in a church-yard, and seeming to have become suddenly paralysed at the completeness of his own deed, which he was too brutally stupid to comprehend till it was really done, two watchmen have arrested him. There lies his victim—motionless, extinct, quite passed away out of the scene, out of the world. Her white visage is a mere wan case that has opened, and the soul has utterly left it. No remains even of bodily pain are traceable, but rather in its vacuity a suggestion that the last nervous consciousness was a kind of contentment that her life of misery should be ended. The graves, the tombstones, the old church walls are alive and ejaculatory with horror—the man alone stands petrific. There is no bold Turpin, or Jack Sheppard-ing to carry the thing off heroically. Stony-jointed and stupified, the murderer stands between the two watchmen, who grasp him with a horror which is the mixed effect of his own upon them, and of their scared discovery of the lifeless object before them. It is plain that if the murderer had been a flash Newgate Calendar hero, he could have burst away from them in a moment. But this would not have answered the purpose of the moralist.

The above series, nevertheless, is among the least estimable of the artist's works; and the last of this set is a horrible mixture of the real and ideal, each assist-

ing the other to produce a most revolting effect. The remains of the executed murderer, which are extended upon the dissecting table, display a consciousness of his situation, and a hideous sensation of helpless yet excruciating agony. Such a picture, though the moral aim is still apparent, is not in the legitimate province of art; and a similar objection might be made to the terrific picture of "Gin Lane," notwithstanding the genius it displays. These latter productions we have quoted, to show that even in his objectionable pictures, Hogarth was never a mere designer of extravagances, and also to mark the point where the comparison with him and Dickens stops. In dealing with repulsive characters and actions, the former sometimes does so in a repulsive manner, not artistically justifiable by any means, because it is a gross copy of the fact. The latter never does this; and his power of dealing with the worst possible characters, at their worst moments, and suggesting their worst language, yet never once committing himself, his book, or his reader, by any gross expression or unredeemed action, is one of the most marvellous examples of fine skill and good taste the world ever saw, and one great (negative) cause of his universal popularity. Had the various sayings and doings, manifestly suggested in some parts of his works, been simply written out—as they would have been in the time of Fielding and Smollet—his works would never have attained one tenth part of their present circulation. Three words—nay, three letters—would have lost him his tens of thousands of readers in nearly every class of society, and they would have lost all the good and all the delight they have derived from his writings—to say nothing of future times.

Upon such apparently slight filaments and conditions does popularity often hang! An author seldom knows how vast an amount of success may depend upon the least degree of forbearance, and even if he does know, is apt to prefer his humour, and take his chance. The effect of a few gross scenes and expressions in the works of several great writers, as a continued drawback to their acknowledged fame, is sufficiently and sadly palpable; nor can we be entirely free from apprehension that eventually, as refinement advances, they may cease to be read altogether, and be exiled to some remote niche in the temple of fame, to enjoy their own immortality. There are strong signs of this already.

Mr. Dickens is one of those happily constituted individuals who can "touch pitch without soiling his fingers;" the peculiar rarity, in his case, being that he can do so without gloves; and, grasping its clinging blackness with both hands, shall yet retain no soil, nor ugly memory. That he is at home in a wood—in green-lanes and all sweet pastoral scenes—who can doubt it that has ever dwelt among them? But he has also been through the back slums of many a St. Giles's. He never "picks his way," but goes splashing on through mud and mire. The mud and mire fly up, and lose themselves like ether—he bears away no stain—nobody has one splash. Nor is the squalid place so bad as it was before he entered it, for some "touch of nature"—of unadulterated pathos—of a crushed human heart uttering a sound from out the darkness and the slough, has left its echo in the air, and half purified it from its malaria of depravity.

A few touches of genuine good feeling, of rich humour, and of moral satire, will redeem anything, so far as the high principle, right aim and end of writing are concerned; this, however, will not suffice for extensive popularity in these days. The form and expression must equally be considered, and the language managed skilfully, especially in the use of sundry metropolitan dialects. The secret was fully understood, and admirably practised by Sir E. L. Bulwer in his novel of "Paul Clifford;" it was grievously misunderstood, except in the matter of dialect, by Mr. Ainsworth in his "Jack Sheppard," which was full of unredeemed crimes, but being told without any offensive language, did its evil work of popularity, and has now gone to its cradle in the cross-roads of literature, and should be henceforth hushed up by all who have—as so many have—a personal regard for its author.

The methods by which such characters and scenes as have been alluded to, are conveyed to the reader with all the force of verisimilitude, yet without offence, are various, though it would perhaps be hardly fair to lift the curtain, and show the busy-browed artist "as he appeared" with his hands full. One means only, as adopted by Mr. Dickens, shall be mentioned, and chiefly as it tends to bring out a trait of his genius as well as art. When he has introduced a girl—her cheeks blotched with rouge, her frock bright red, her boots

green, her hair stuck over with yellow hair-papers, and a glass of "ruin" in her hand—the very next time he alludes to her, he calls her "this young lady!" Now, if he had called this girl by her actual designation, as awarded to her by indignant, moral man—who has nothing whatever to do with such degradation—the book would have been destroyed; whereas, the reader perfectly well knows what class the poor gaudy outcast belongs to, and the author gains a humorous effect by the evasive appellation. In like manner he deals with a dirty young thief, as "the first-named young gentleman;"* while the old Jew Fagin—a horrible compound of all sorts of villany, who teaches "the young idea" the handicraft of picking pockets, under pretence of having an amusing game of play with the boys—the author designates as "the merry old gentleman!" Everybody knows what this grizzly old hyena-bearded wretch really is, and everybody is struck with a sense of the ludicrous at the preposterous nature of the compliment. In this way the author avoids disgust—loses no point of his true meaning—and gains in the humour of his scene. He has other equally ingenious methods, which perhaps may be studied, or perhaps they are the result of the fine tact of a subtle instinct and good taste; enough, however, has been said on this point.

The tragic power and finer qualities of expression in Hogarth are elucidated with exquisite precision and truth by Charles Lamb in his Essay, where he calls particular attention to the "Rake's Progress;" the last scenes of "Marriage à la Mode;" "Industry and Idleness;" and the "Distressed Poet." He makes some fine comments upon the expression which is put into the face of the broken-down Rake, in the last plate but one of that series, where "the long history of a mispent life is compressed into the countenance as plainly as the series of plates before had told it. There is no consciousness of the presence of spectators, in or out of the picture, but grief kept to a man's self, a face retiring from notice, with the shame which great anguish sometimes brings with it—a final leave taken of hope—the coming on of vacancy and stupefaction—a

* "Un dopo pranzo, il Furbo e mastro Bates avendo un invito per la sera, il primo nominato *signorino* si ficcò in capo di mostrare un certo genio," &c. Translation, Milano, 1840. But to designate the Artful Dodger throughout, simply as "il Furbo," is hard—unhandsome.

beginning alienation of mind looking like tranquillity. Here is matter for the mind of the beholder to feed on for the hour together—matter to feed and fertilise the mind.” This is not a fanciful criticism: all that Lamb describes of that face, is *there*, and anybody may see, who has an educated eye, and clear perceptions of humanity behind it. Lamb also alludes to the kneeling female in the Bedlam scene of the same series; to the “sad endings of the Harlot and the Rake,” in their respective “Progresses;” to the “heart-bleeding entreaties for forgiveness of the adulterous wife,” in the last scene but one of “Marriage à la Mode,” and to the sweetly soothing face of the wife which seems “to allay and ventilate the feverish, irritated feelings of her poor, poverty-distracted mate,” in the print of the “Distressed Poet,” who has a tattered map of the mines of Peru stuck against his squalid walls. Quite equal, also, to any of these, and yet more clearly to the bent of our argument, is the “image of natural love” displayed in the aged woman in Plate V. of “Industry and Idleness,” “who is clinging with the fondness of hope not quite extinguished, to her brutal vice-hardened child, whom she is accompanying to the ship which is to bear him away from his native soil: in whose shocking face every trace of the human countenance seems obliterated, and a brute beast’s to be left instead, shocking and repulsive to all but her who watched over it in its cradle before it was so sadly altered, and feels it must belong to her while a pulse, by the vindictive laws of his country, shall be suffered to continue to beat in it.”

How analogous, how closely applicable all this is to the finest parts of the works of Mr. Dickens, must be sufficiently apparent. It may be hardly necessary to mention any corresponding scenes in particular; one or two, however, rise too forcibly to the mind to be repressed. In “*Oliver Twist*”—the work which is most full of crimes and atrocities and the lowest characters, of all its author’s productions, in which these things are by no means scarce—there are some of the deepest touches of pathos, and of the purest tenderness, not exceeded by any author who ever lived—simply because they grow out of the very ground of our common humanity, and being Nature at her best, are in themselves perfect, by universal laws. Of this kind is the scene where the poor sweet-hearted consumptive child, who

is weeding the garden before anybody else has risen, climbs up the gate, and puts his little arms through to clasp Oliver round the neck, and kiss him "a good bye," as he is running away from his wretched apprenticeship.* They had both been beaten and starved in the workhouse together, and with the little child's "Good-bye, dear—God bless you!" went the full-throated memory of all the tears they had shed together, and the present consciousness that they should never see each other again. When little Oliver opened the door at night to run away, the stars looked farther off than he had ever seen them before. The world seemed widening to the poor outcast boy. Does not the reader also recollect the terrible scene of the funeral of the pauper in the same work? They, and everything about them, are so squalid and filthy that they look like "rats in a drain." She died of starvation—her husband, and her old mother are sitting beside the body. "There was neither fire nor candle, when she died. She died in the dark—in the dark. She couldn't even see her children's faces, though we heard her gasping out their names!" O, ye scions of a refined age—readers of the scrupulous taste, who, here and there, in apprehensive circles, exclaim upon Dickens as a low writer, and a lover of low scenes—look at this passage—find out *how* low it is—and rise up from the contemplation chastened, purified—wiser, because sorrow-softened and better men through the enlargement of sympathies. One more, though it can only be alluded to, as it requires a full knowledge of the characters and circumstances to be enough appreciated. It is the terrific scene where the girl Nancy is murdered by the brutal housebreaker Sykes.† The whole thing is done in the most uncompromising manner—a more ferocious and ghastly deed was never perpetrated; but what words are those which burst from the beseeching heart and soul of the victim? At this moment, with murder glaring above her, all the sweetness of a nature, which the extreme corrosion of an utterly vicious life had not been able to obliterate from the last recesses of her being, gushes out, and endeavouring to lay her head upon the bosom of her ruffian paramour, she calls upon him to leave their bad courses—to lead a new life

* Oliver Twist, vol. i., c. 7.

† Oliver Twist, vol. iii., c. 45.

—and to have faith in God's mercy! While uttering which, she finds no mercy from man, and is destroyed.

Any one who would rightly—that is, philosophically as well as pleasantly—estimate the genius of Mr. Dickens, should first read his works fairly through, and then read the Essays by Charles Lamb, and by Hazlitt,* on the genius of Hogarth: or if the hesitating reader in question feels a preliminary distaste for anything which displays low vices without the high sauce of aristocracy to disguise the real repulsiveness (a feeling natural enough, by the way), then let him reverse the process, and begin with the Essays.

It is observable that neither Hogarth nor Dickens ever portray a mere sentimental character, nor a morbid one. Perhaps the only exception in all Mr. Dickens' works is his character of Monks, which is a failure—a weak villain, whose pretended power is badly suggested by black scowlings and melo-dramatic night-wanderings in a dark cloak, and mouths-full of extravagant curses of devils, and pale-faced frothings at the mouth, and fits of convulsion. That the subtle old Fagin should have stood in any awe of him is incredible: even the worthy old gentleman, Mr. Brownlow, is too many for him, and the stronger character of the two. In fact, this Monks is a pretender, and genuine characters only suit the hand of our author. A merely respectable and amiable common-place character is also pretty certain to present rather a wearisome, prosy appearance in the scenes of Hogarth and of Dickens. They are only admirable, and in their true element, when dealing with characters full of unscrupulous life, of genial humour, or of depravities and follies: or with characters of tragic force and heart-felt pathos.

Both have been accused of a predilection for the lower classes of society, from inability to portray those of the upper classes. Now, the predilection being admitted, the reason of this is chiefly attributable to the fact that there is little if any humour or genuine wit in the upper classes, where all *gusto* of that kind is polished away; and also to the fact that both of them have a direct moral purpose in view, viz., a desire to ameliorate the condition of the poorer classes by showing what society has made of them, or allowed them to become—and to continue.

* On Marriage à la Mode.

Neither of these great artists ever concentrates the interest upon any one great character, nor even upon two or three, but while their principals are always highly finished, and sufficiently prominent on important occasions, they are nevertheless often used as centres of attraction, or as a means for progressively introducing numerous other characters which cross them at every turn, and circle them continually with a buzzing world of outward vitality.

There is a profusion and prodigality of character in the works of these two artists. A man, woman, or child, cannot buy a morsel of pickled salmon, look at his shoe, or bring in a mug of ale ; a solitary object cannot pass on the other side of the way ; a boy cannot take a bite at a turnip, or hold a horse ; a by-stander cannot answer the simplest question ; a dog cannot fall into a doze ; a bird cannot whet his bill ; a pony cannot have a peculiar nose, nor a pig one ear, but out peeps the first germ of "a character." Nor does the ruling tendency and seed-filled hand stop with such as these ; for inanimate objects become endowed with consciousness and purpose, and mingle appropriately in the background of the scene. Sometimes they even act as principals, and efficient ones too, either for merriment and light comedy, genial beauty and sweetness, or the most squalid pantomimists of the "heavy line of business." Lamb particularly notices what he terms "the dumb rhetoric of the scenery—for tables, and chairs, and joint-stools in Hogarth are living and significant things," and Hazlitt very finely remarks on the drunken appearance of the houses in "Gin Lane," which "seem reeling and tumbling about in all directions, as if possessed with the frenzy of the scene." All this is equally apparent in the works of Dickens. He not only animates furniture, and stocks and stones, or even the wind, with human purposes, but often gives them an individual rather than a merely generalized character. To his perceptions, old deserted broken-windowed houses grow crazed with "staring each other out of countenance," and crook-backed chimney-pots in cowls turn slowly round with witch-like mutter and sad whispering moan, to cast a hollow spell upon the scene. The interior of the house of the miser Gride,* where there stands an "old grim

* *Nicholas Nickleby*, vol. ii., chap. 56.

clock, whose iron heart beats heavily within his dusty case," and where the tottering old clothes-presses "slink away from the sight" into their melancholy murky corners—is a good instance of this; and yet equally so is the description of the house* in which the Kenwigses, Newman Noggs, and Crawl, have their abode, where the parlour of one of them is, perhaps, "a thought dirtier" (no substantial difference being possible to the eye, the room is left to its own self-consciousness) than any of its neighbours, and in front of which "the fowls who peck about the kennels, jerk their bodies hither and thither with a gait which none but town fowls are ever seen to adopt." Nor can we forget the neighbourhood of "Todgers's," where "strange, solitary pumps were found hiding themselves, for the most part, in blind alleys, and keeping company with fire-ladders."† All these things are thoroughly characteristic of the condition and eccentricity of the inmates, and of the whole street, even as the beadle's pocket-book, "which, like himself, was corpulent." A gloomy building, with chambers in it, up a yard, where it had so little business to be, "that one could scarcely help fancying it must have run there when it was a young house, playing at hide-and-seek with other houses, and have for gotten the way out again;"‡ and the potatoes, which, after Cratchit had blown the fire, "bubbled up, and knocked loudly at the saucepan lid, to be let out, and peeled"§—these are among the innumerable instances to which we have alluded. These descriptions and characteristics are always appropriate; and are not thrown in for the mere sake of fun and farcicality. That they have, at the same time, a marvellous tendency to be very amusing, may cause the sceptic to shake his head at some of these opinions; the pleasurable fact, nevertheless, is in any case quite as well for the author and his readers.

Mr. Dickens' characters, numerous as they are, have each the roundness of individual reality combined with generalization—most of them representing a class. The method by which he accomplishes this, is worth observing, and easily observed, as the process is always the same. He never developes a character from within, but commences by showing how the nature of the

* Nicholas Nickleby, vol. ii., chap. 14.

† Martin Chuzzlewit, chap. 9.

‡ Christmas Carol, p. 18.

§ Ibid., p. 87.

individual has *been* developed externally by his whole life in the world. To this effect, he first paints his portrait at full-length ; sometimes his dress before his face, and most commonly his dress and demeanour. When he has done this to his satisfaction, he *feels in* the man, and the first words that man utters are the key-note of the character, and of all that he subsequently says and does. The author's hand never wavers, never becomes untrue to his creations. What they promise to be at first (except in the case of Mr. Pickwick, about whom the author evidently half-changed his mind as he proceeded) they continue to the end.

That Mr. Dickens often caricatures, has been said by many people ; but if they examined their own minds they would be very likely to find that this opinion chiefly originated, and was supported by certain undoubted caricatures among the illustrations. *Le célèbre Cruishank*—as the French translator of "Nicholas Nickleby" calls him, appears sometimes to have made his sketches without due reference, if any, to the original. These remarks, however, are far from being intended to invalidate the great excellence of many of the illustrations in "Oliver Twist" and "Nicholas Nickleby," and also of those by Hablott Brown and Cattermole in "Barnaby Rudge" and "Martin Chuzzlewit."

What a collection—what a motley rout—what a crowd—what a conflict for precedence in the mind, as we pause to contemplate these beings with whom Mr. Dickens has over-peopled our literature. Yet there are but few which, all things considered, we should wish to "emigrate." The majority are finished characters—not sketches. Of those which were most worthy of their high finish many instantly arise in person to supersede the pen. Mr. Pecksniff, sit down ! you are not asked to address the chair on behalf of the company. Nor need Sam Weller commence clearing a passage with one hand, and pulling forward Mr. Pickwick with the other : nobody can speak satisfactorily for an assemblage composed of such heterogeneous elements. The cordial welcome which would be so very applicable to Old Fezziwig, John Browdie, Newman Noggs, Tom Pinch, and a hundred others, would fall very unintelligibly on the air on turning to the face of Ralph Nickleby, Mr. Brass, Jonas Chuzzlewit, and a hundred others. What variety and contrast, yet what truth, in such char-

acters as Oliver Twist and Barnaby Rudge, the Yankee agent Scadder, and Hugh, Mr. Varden and Mr. Brass, Nelly's grandfather, and Mr. Stiggins! Nor should we forget Sykes's dog, Kit's pony, and Barnaby's raven. But however excellent our author may be in his men, he is equally so with his women. Mrs. Weller, and Mrs. Nickleby, Mrs. Jarley and Miss Montfathers, Mrs. Gamp, the Marchioness, Mrs. Varden, the widow who accused Mr. Pickwick, the sisters Cherry and Merry, and little Nell, and many more, are all acquaintances for life. In his young lady heroines Mr. Dickens is not equally successful. They have a strong tendency to be unromantically dutiful, which in real life, is no doubt "an excellent thing in woman," but it is apt, unless founded upon some truly noble principle, to become uninteresting in fiction. Their sacrifices to duty are generally common-place, conventional, and of very equivocal good, if not quite erroneous. Some of the amiable old gentlemen are also of the description so very agreeable to meet in private life, but who do not greatly advantage the interest of these books, amidst the raciness and vigour of which they hardly form the right sort of contrast. With reference to his female characters, however, who are "better-halves," if his portraits be faithful representations, especially of the middle and lower classes—and it is greatly to be feared they are but *too* true, in many cases—then we shall discover the alarming amount of screws, scolds, tartars, and termagants, over whom her Britannic Majesty's liege married subjects male, pleasantly assume to be "lords and masters." France lifts its shoulders at it, and Germany turns pale.

The materials of which the works under our present consideration are composed, are evidently the product of a frequent way-faring in dark places, and among the most secret haunts where vice and misery hide their heads; this way-faring being undertaken by a most observing eye, and a mind exactly suited to the qualities of its external sight. Many and important may be the individual biographical facts; but if ever it were well said of an author that his "life" was in his books, (and a very full life, too,) this might be said of Mr. Dickens. Amidst the variety of stirring scenes and characters which unavoidably surround every one who has duties to perform among mixed classes of mankind, and amidst

the far darker scenes and characters which the bent of his genius caused him to trace out into their main sources and abodes, were the broad masses of his knowledge derived, and the principal faculties of his mind and heart wrought up to their capacious development. When he has not seen it before, he usually goes to see all that can be seen of a thing before he writes about it. To several of the characters he has drawn, objections have often been made, that they were exaggerations, or otherwise not perfectly true to nature. It is a mistake to think them untrue: they are, for the most part, *fac-simile creations*, built up with materials from the life, as retained by a most tenacious memory. They are *not* mere realities, but the type and essence of real classes; while the personal and graphic touches render them at the same time individualized. Sometimes, it is true, he draws a mere matter-of-fact common-place reality; and these individuals, like Mrs. Maylie, Mr. Brownlow, Harry Maylie, Mrs. Bedwin, (except when the latter wipes the tears from her eyes, and then wipes her spectacles' eyes by the unconscious force of association,) and several others, are a sort of failure "in a book" where they walk about with a very respectable and rather uncomfortable air.

The delineation of characters constitutes so very much the more prominent and valuable portion of Mr. Dickens' works, that it is extremely difficult to detach them from any view of an entire production. Take away his characters, and the plots of his stories will look meagre and disconnected. He tells a very short story admirably; but he cannot manage one extending through a volume or two. His extended narrative is, in fact, a series of short stories, or pictures of active interest introducing new people, who are brought to bear more or less—scarcely at all, or only atmospherically, sometimes—upon the principals. Perhaps he may not have the faculty of telling a story of prolonged interest; but, in any case, he has done right hitherto not to attempt it by any concentrating unity of action. Not any of his characters are weighty enough in themselves to stand "the wear and tear" and carry on the accumulating interests of a prolonged narrative. They need adventitious aids and relief; and most ably and abundantly are these supplied.

The immense circulation of Mr. Dickens' works, both

at home and abroad, and the undoubted influence they exercise, render it an imperative duty to point out everything in them which seems founded in error, and the moral tendency of which may be in any way and in any degree injurious. We are anxious to display his most striking merits—and every fault worth mentioning. Nor do we believe, when looking at the direct and benevolent aim which characterizes all the author's efforts, that such a proceeding can meet with any other feeling on his part than that of a frank approval, even though he may not in all cases be disposed to admit the validity of the objections.

The main design of Mr. Dickens is for the most part original, and he always has a moral aim in view, tending to effect practical good. The moral tendency of all his works is apparent, if they are regarded in their entirety as pictures of human nature, in which no romantic sympathy is sought to be induced towards what is vicious and evil—but antipathy and alarm at present misery and ultimate consequences—while a genuine heart-felt sympathy is induced towards all that is essentially good in human nature. This is true of all his works considered under general views; in some of the details, however, the morality becomes doubtful from an undue estimate of conventional duty when brought into collision with the affections and passions. The author always has the purest and best intentions on this score; nevertheless, some of his amiable, virtuous and high-spirited characters break down lamentably, when brought into conflict with society's grave, misleading code on the subject of heart and pocket, or "birth." Thus, Rose Maylie—the beautiful young heroine in "Oliver Twist"—refuses her devoted lover, whom she also loves, merely because she does not know who her parents were, and she is therefore of "doubtful birth," and actually persists in her refusal. Nor is this compromise of the strongest and best feelings of nature to mere conventional *doubts* the only objectionable part of the story; for the act is spoken of as a fine thing in her to do, as inferring a refined feeling for her lover's honour and future satisfaction, though he, the man himself, declares he is satisfied with what she *is*, let her origin have been as doubtful or as certain as it might. Being quite assured of his love, she tells him he "must endeavour to forget her"—that he should think of "how

many other hearts he might gain"—that he should make her the confidante "of some other passion." These are the wretched, aggravating insincerities so often employed in real life. It is not intended that Rose should be regarded as a fool or a coquette, or in any other disadvantageous light; but on the contrary she is said to have "a noble mind," to be "full of intelligence;" and that her characteristic is "self-sacrifice." Here, then, occurs the very equivocal, if not totally erroneous morality; for so far from this act being simply one of "self-sacrifice," the fact is apparent that Rose sacrifices her lover's genuine unadulterated feeling to her overweening estimate of her own importance as a strictly correct-principled young lady in the social sphere. When he leaves the house early in the morning with an aching heart, looking up in vain for a last glimpse, she secretly peeps at him from behind the window curtains! There is too much of this already in the actual world, and it should not be held up for admiration in works of fiction. She makes, finally, a very bad excuse about the duty she owes "to herself," which is, that she, not knowing her origin, and being portionless, should not bring any disgrace upon her lover, and blight his "brilliant prospects;" and very much is also said about the great "triumphs" this young 'squire is to "achieve" in parliament and upwards, by "his great talents, and powerful connections." This only adds nonsense to the young lady's false morality and prudery; for the young 'squire is one of those ordinary sort of clever sparks, about whose great talents and probable achievements the less that is said the better.*

It has been remarked that our author does not develop his characters from within, but describes them with a master-hand externally, and then leaves them to develop themselves by word and action, which they do most completely. His process is the converse of that of Godwin, who develops solely from within, and whose characters dilate as they advance, and more than carry out the first principles of their internal natures with which we were made acquainted. On the other hand, let any one turn to the description of Rose Maylie when she is first introduced, and then it will be seen that the expected character "breaks down"—nothing comes of

* *Oliver Twist*, chaps. 29, 33, 34.

it. Again: it must be admitted that Kate Nickleby is an admirable, high-spirited, and very loveable girl; and that Nicholas Nickleby is a very excellent counterpart, and a young man of that sort of thorough-bred mettle, which wins regard and inspires entire confidence. Yet both, undoubtedly fine spirits, get themselves into equivocal positions where their best and strongest feelings are concerned. Kate refuses the hand of Frank Cheerble, because she is poor and he rich, and she has received kindness and assistance from his uncles: Nicholas gives up Madeline Bray, for precisely the same reasons,—though in point of value, as human beings, Nicholas and Kate are very superior to the somewhat too real Mr. Frank, and the dutifully uninteresting Miss Madeline, who has consented—the old story of having a selfish father—to marry the miserly dotard, Andrew Gride. Now, each of the parties is well aware of the love of the other, which they sacrifice to a minor moral. If the self-sacrifice of the individual were all that was involved in the question, then indeed gratitude and other secondary causes might perhaps be fairly allowed to influence the painful resignation of a higher feeling; but where the happiness of the beloved object—and this is the main point of the question—is involved, then the sacrifice becomes, to say the least of it, an equivocal morality—a certain evil, with some very doubtful good. At the head of the chapter which displays the quadruple sacrifice made by Nicholas and Kate, are these words—“Wherein Nicholas and his sister forfeit the good opinion of all worldly and prudent people.” On the contrary; what they do is precisely in accordance with the opinion of the worldly and prudent, and would be certain to obtain the usual admiration.

But the author's better genius is not to be thwarted by these half-measures and short-comings, and strict lines of duty; for the truth of imagination is stronger in him than the prudence of all the world. Out of his own book will we convict him. After Kate has told her brother of her rejection of the man who loved her, (and whom she loved,) on the grounds of her poverty and obligations to his uncle, her brother thus soliloquizes. “What man,” thought Nicholas proudly, “would not be sufficiently rewarded for any sacrifice of fortune, by the

possession of such a heart as this, which, but that" (here peeps in the extraneous misgiving) "hearts weigh light, and gold and silver heavy," (but this should not be so with lovers!) "is beyond all praise. Frank has money, and wants no more. More, would not buy him such a treasure as Kate? And yet in unequal marriages the rich party is always supposed to make a great sacrifice, and the other to get a good bargain!" (And again, the misgiving in full force.) "But I am thinking like a lover, or like an ass, which I suppose is pretty nearly the same."* Instead of being an ass, this stumbling lover, who continues to run his head against the truth, rather figures as a moralist *malgré lui*. The vacillations in the above passage are striking. The main truth of the question, however, is yet brought out unalloyed by the good heart of "brother Charles," who says banteringly to his nephew: "How dare you think, Frank, that we would have you marry for money, when youth, beauty, and every amiable virtue and excellence were to be had for love?" That is the point; well said, "old true-penny." Addressing Nicholas, he thus continues: "Madeline's heart is occupied by you, and worthily and naturally. This fortune is destined to be yours, but you have a greater fortune in her, sir, than you would have in money, were it forty times told."† Surely a sincere passion ought to teach all this to lovers, without waiting for a hint from the "warm" old gentleman of the story?

Yet again, an objection of another kind—for Mr. Dickens has quite enough strength to be dealt with unsparringly. It has been previously said, and the reasons for the opinion have been stated, that "Oliver Twist," the work which is open to most animadversion, has a beneficial moral tendency, and is full of touches of tenderness, and pathos, and of generous actions and emotions.‡ The objection about to be offered, is on the ground of justice being made vindictive and ferocious, which, be it ever so just, has not a good moral tendency. This is said with reference to the death of a most detestable ruffian—Sykes—and it was important that no sympathy should, by any possibility, be induced towards so brutalized a villain. Such, however, is the case; for the

* Nicholas Nickleby, chap. 61.

† Ibid. chap. 63.

‡ The author's introductory defence to the third edition we have only seen after finishing this essay. It is unanswerable, but ought not to have been needed.

author having taken over-elaborate and extreme pains to prevent it, the "extremes meet." After the brutal murder of the poor girl Nancy, the perpetrator hurries away, he knows not whither, and for days and nights wanders and lurks about fields and lanes, pursued by the most horrible phantoms and imaginings, amidst exhaustion from hunger and fatigue and a constant terror of discovery. Far from making a morbid hero of him, in any degree, or being guilty of the frequent error of late years, that of endeavouring to surround an atrocious villain with various romantic associations, Mr. Dickens has shown the murderer in all his wretchedness, horror, and utter bewilderment consequent on his crime. So far, the moral tendency is perfect. A climax is required; and here the author over-shoots his aim. Perhaps, in reality, no retribution, on earth, could very well be too heavy for such a detestable wretch as Sykes to suffer; but we cannot bear to see so much. The author hunts down the victim, like a wild beast, through mud and mire, and darkness, and squalid ways, with crowds upon crowds, like hell-hounds gnashing and baying at his heels. Round the grim and desolate old edifice, the haunt of crime and desperation, rising out of a deep corrosion of filth, as if it had actually grown up, like a loathsome thing out of the huge ditch—round this darksome and hideous abode, in which the murderer has taken his last refuge with thrice-barred doors, the infuriate masses of human beings accumulate, throng upon throng, like surge after surge, all clamouring for his life. Hunted with tenfold more ferocity than ever was fox, or boar, or midnight wolf—having scarce a chance of escape—certain to be torn and trampled amidst his mad, delirious struggles, into a miry death, when caught—our sympathies go with the hunted victim in this his last extremity. It is not "Sykes, the murderer," of whom we think—it is no longer the "criminal" in whose fate we are interested—it is for that one worn and haggard man with all the world against him—that one hunted human creature, with an infuriate host pursuing him, howling beneath for his blood, and striving to get at him, and tear him limb from limb. All his old friends turn away from him—look mutely at him, and aghast—and down below, all round the hideous house, in hideous torch-light boils up the surging sea of a maddened multitude. His throwing up

the window, and menacing the crowd below, had a grandeur in it—it rouses the blood—we menace with him—we would cast off from his plunging horse, that man who “showed such fury,” and offered money for his blood—from the bridge, that man who incessantly called out that the hunted victim would escape from the back—and we would have silenced the voice from the broken wall, that screamed away the last chance of a desperate man for his life. In truth, we would fairly have had him escape—whether to die in the black moat below, or alone in some dark and far-off field. We are with this hunted-down human being, brought home to our sympathies by the extremity of his distress; and we are *not* with the howling mass of demons outside. The only human beings we recognize are the victim—and his dog.

If the above feeling be at all shared by general readers, it will then appear that Mr. Dickens has defeated his own aim, and made the criminal an object of sympathy, owing to the vindictive fury with which he is pursued to his destruction, because the author was so anxious to cut him off from *all* sympathy. The overstrained terror of the intended moral, has thus an immoral tendency. It may, perhaps, be argued that as the sympathy only commences at that very point, where the detestable individual is lost sight of, and verges into the generalized impression of a human being in the last degree of distress—there is no sympathy *given* to the *criminal*? The moment he is again thought of as the murderer Sykes, the sympathy vanishes; and therefore no harm is done. This would present very fair grounds for a tough metaphysical contest, but it is never good to throw the feelings into a puzzle, and we prefer to enter a direct protest against the accumulation of vindictive ferocity with which this criminal is pursued, as tending to defeat the unquestionable moral aim of the author.

Certainly not the highest, but certainly the most prominent characteristic of Mr. Dickens' mind, is his humour. His works furnish a constant commentary on the distinction between wit and humour; for of sheer wit, either in remark or repartee, there is scarcely an instance in any of his volumes, while of humour there is a fulness and *gusto* in every page, which would be searched for in vain to such an extent, among all other authors. It is not meant that there are not several au-

thors, and of the present time, who might equal the best points of humour in any of Mr. Dickens' works, but there is no author who can "keep it up" as he does; no author who can fill page after page with unfailing and irresistible humour, the only "relief" to which, if any, shall be fun, and the exuberance of animal spirits—a surplus vitality like that which makes him, after signing his name to a letter or note, give such a whirl of flourishing, which resembles an immense capering over a thing done, before he is "off" to something else. No other author could have written the whole of chapter twenty-nine of "Martin Chuzzlewit,"—nor perhaps the last two pages. Frequently, the humour is combined with the richest irony—as at the funeral of old Anthony Chuzzlewit, where the doctor and the undertaker affect not to know each other. Frequently the humour takes the appearance of burlesque and farce, as when Mr. Bumble the beadle puts on his cocked hat, and dances round the tea-table; but when it is recollected that he has been courting the mistress of the place, and has just discovered himself to be an accepted man, and that she has left him alone in the room in the first glow of conscious success, the genuine humour of the proceeding becomes manifest. Sometimes the humour not only takes the show of mere animal spirits, but may be said to depend solely upon them, and to set the lack of wit at utter defiance, as by absolute challenge. This is often done in the person of Master Charley Bates,* who usually falls into shouts of merriment at nothing in itself laughable; and of John Browdie,† who once nearly chokes himself, displaying a great red face and round eyes, and coughing and stamping about with immoderate laughter—and all for the poorest jokes. The joke is felt to be nothing, yet the effect upon John Browdie is so palpable, that it is irresistible to the beholder. In like manner, Mr. Mould‡ palates, and relishes, and repeats, one of the very smallest and driest of jokes, because it has a directly professional application that tickles him; and such is his unaffected delight, that at last, witless as it is, the humorous effect is unquestionable. But if such points as these might be equalled by several other authors, there are various scenes in the works of Mr. Dickens which are peculiar to himself,

* See *Oliver Twist*. † *Nicholas Nickleby*. ‡ See *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

for their fullness of humour, mingled with subtle irony, and knowledge of life and character, and are in their combinations unlike any other author. No other author, of past or present times, so far as can be judged by their productions, could have written several scenes, or chapters, taken entire, as they stand in the works of "Boz." For instance, the whole chapter in which Mr. Mould, the undertaker, is discovered in his domestic relations,* where the very nature of the whole man is brought out by the fulsome palavering gossip of the nurse, Mrs. Gamp, who has been "recommended" by Mr. Mould to nurse a certain sick man, and whose permission she comes to ask that she may go and nurse another sick man all night, and thus receive pay from both. Another nurse, recommended by Mr. Mould, was attending upon the latter sick man by day—and it is therefore evident that she also leaves her charge at night to go probably to do duty elsewhere. Hence it appears that four sick people are neglected during twelve hours out of each twenty-four, so that Mr. Mould has good chances of a funeral or two among them. Nothing of this kind is said—nothing is thrown up to the surface of the scene, except its racy humour—but are not the inferences palpable in their keen irony? The scene where this horrid nurse, Mrs. Gamp, goes to fill her office by the sick bed for the night† is an unexampled mixture of the humorous, the grotesque, the characteristic, and detestable—to say nothing of the practical service of the "warning." Two other scenes occur to the mind, which, for the richness of their humour and character, and the thorough knowledge the author has of "his men," are, in their way, quite unparalleled and unrivalled in literature. We allude to the scenes where the two men who, in their circumstances, and the external character they supported, would have been the last voluntarily to lose those wits which were so very necessary always to be kept "about them," did actually lose the same for a time by getting intoxicated—need it be said that these two men are the methodist preacher Mr. Stiggins, called "the Shepherd:"‡ and the plausible, smooth-surfaced, self-possessed hypocrite, Mr. Pecksniff§—the character which bids fair to be, when the work is finished, the master-piece of all the author's

* Martin Chuzzlewit, chap. 25.

‡ The Pickwick Papers.

† Ibid., chap. 25.

§ Martin Chuzzlewit, chap. 9.

numerous characters, or rivalled only by the more subtle delineation of young Martin Chuzzlewit. If ever the conflicting proverbs that "liquor disguises a man"—and, that "drunkenness exposes a man," were brought to a final issue in favour of the exposition of nature induced by the latter, here may it be witnessed in those two inimitable scenes. They not only display the secret capacities and the habitual bent of the mind, but may also be regarded as physiological studies. A man of genius, to develope and set forth the noble objects of his soul, need not absolutely possess great physical energies, for his work can wait—whether he be above ground or beneath it; but a charlatan, to succeed, *must* possess a strong physique, for his work cannot wait, and he must reap while he lives, or not at all. In the most humorous and strictly characteristic manner—yet without the least apparent purpose—the physique of the Shepherd, and of Mr. Pecksniff, is displayed in these scenes, and we there discover how much secret strength was necessary to enable them to maintain, at all other times, their bland and unruffled exterior, and to repress and govern so much dangerous "stuff" within them. The grave, oily, most respectable Mr. Pecksniff, after being repeatedly put to bed, yet as repeatedly jumping up again, and appearing at the top of the landing-place in his shirt, discoursing with polite, half-conscious absurdity over the banisters, gives a finish to his character, such as no other condition of affairs could accomplish, and no words so exquisitely portray. It is the same man, drunk, who, being sober, had the strength of self-possession—when his house was filled with confusion, and the last man he wished to see that confusion, was at his door—to settle the dangerous parties in different rooms, and putting on a gardening hat, open the door himself with a demure face and a spade in his hand! "The force of humour could no further go."

But if Mr. Dickens does not display anything of what is recognized as sheer wit in his writings, he frequently indulges in irony, and sometimes in sarcasm. To his great credit, these instances are never of a morbid misanthropical kind, and in the shape of transient side hits and stabs at human nature; they will almost invariably be found directed against social wrongs, "the insolence of office," against false notions of honour, against mere external respectability, and with a view to defend the poor

against injustice and oppression. His favourite method, however, of exposing and attacking wrongs, and "abating nuisances," is through the humorous display of characters actively engrossed with their own objects and designs. With theories, or systems of philosophy which are not to his mind, he also deals in a similar style of pleasantry. The opening pages of Chapter XIII. of "Oliver Twist," are an admirable instance.

If it be an interesting thing to trace the cause and means of a man's rise to fame, and the various methods by which he mastered obscurity amidst all the crowd struggling for the same narrow door, and fairly won the sympathy, the admiration, and the gold of contemporaneous multitudes, it is no less curious and interesting to observe the failures of successful men, their miscalculations at the very height of the game, and the redoubled energy and skill with which they recovered their position. Few are perhaps aware that Mr. Dickens once wrote an Opera; not very many perhaps know that he wrote a Farce for the theatre, which was acted; and the great majority of his readers do not at all care to remember that he wrote a "Life of Grimaldi," in two volumes. The opera was set to music very prettily by Hullah, and was produced at the St. James' theatre; but, somehow, it vanished into space; albeit, at dusty old book-stalls, pale-faced near-sighted men, poking over the broken box or tea-chest that usually contains the cheap sweepings of the stock within, avouch that once or twice they have caught a glimpse of the aforesaid lyrics, labelled price three pence. As for the theatrical piece, it "went off" in a smoke, with Harley wringing his hands at the top of the cloud; and for the "Life of Grimaldi," everybody was disappointed with it, because, although Joseph was certainly in private "no fool," yet as the only hold he had upon our sympathies was with reference to his merry-makings at Christmas-tide, the public certainly did not expect to find most of that set aside, and in its place a somewhat melancholy narrative hopeless of all joyous result from the first, yet endeavouring to be pleasant "on the wrong side of the mouth." It was like the rehearsal of a pantomime, the poor clown being of course in "plain clothes," and having pains in his limbs, from a fall. It was a sad antithesis to expectation, and all old associations.

Leaving these failures behind him with so light a pace

that no one heard him moving off, and never once turning back his head,—which might have attracted the public attention to his ill-luck—our author started forward on his way, as if nothing had happened.

The slowness, and dogged grudging with which the English public are brought to admit of great merit, except in cases where their admiration is suddenly carried off unawares from them, is only to be equalled by the prodigality of disposition towards a favourite once highly established. And this influences all classes, more or less. A recent instance must have caused our author great merriment. At a public dinner a short time since, Mr. Serjeant Talfourd, regretting the absence of his friend Mr. Dickens, paid an appropriate and well-merited compliment to the breadth of surface over which the life, character, and general knowledge contained in his works, extended. The reporter not rightly hearing this, or not attending to it, but probably saying to himself, 'Oh—it's about Dickens—one can't go wrong,' gave a version of the learned Serjeant's speech in the next morning's paper, to the effect that Mr. Dickens' genius comprised that of all the greatest minds of the time, put together, and that his works represented all their works. The high ideal and imaginative—the improvements in the steam-engine and machinery—all the new discoveries in anatomy, geology, and electricity, with the prize cartoons, and history and philosophy thrown into the bargain,—search from the "Sketches by Boz" to Martin Chuzzlewit inclusive, and you shall find, in some shape or other "properly understood," everything valuable which the world of letters elsewhere contains. The gratuitous gift of this confused accumulation, is only to be equalled by the corresponding gift of "madness," with which our most amusing, and, in his turn, most amused author was obligingly favoured by an absurd report, extensively circulated, some year or two ago.

The true characteristics of Mr. Dickens' mind are strongly and definitively marked—they are objective, and always have a practical tendency. His universality does not extend beyond the verge of the actual and concrete. The ideal and the elementary are not his region.

Having won trophies over so large a portion of the intellectual and plastic world, Mr. Dickens projected a flight into the ideal hemisphere. Accordingly he gave us Master Humphrey, and his Clock. The design had

a sort of German look ; but the style in which it opened was precisely that adopted by the American novelist Brockden Brown, (a man of original genius beyond doubt—the author of “Carwin,” “Wieland,” &c..) in one of his works especially, we forget which. The introduction, which only bordered upon the ideal, and seemed to be a preliminary softening of our mortal earth, with a view to preparing it for “fine air,” was no sooner over than the reader had to commence a second preparation, called an “Introduction to the Giant Chronicles,” which was going back to the old style of “Boz,” and seemed like giving the matter up at the outset. The “First Night of the Giant Chronicles” settled the business. The real giant, “Boz,” could make nothing of the ideal giants—they turned out to be mere Guildhall fellows, pretending to know something beyond the city. The “Clock Case” was a dead failure, so was the “Deaf Gentleman,” so was the “Correspondence.” Affairs began to look ominous. A brief story of tragic interest was told, and finely. It diverted the attention ; but the author was obliged to proceed with his series, and accordingly he commenced “The Old Curiosity Shop”—a sufficiently vague title, which might lead to anything or nothing—and then we had some fresh failures in the shape of “Correspondence.” Now, if the author had been a vain man, or a wrong-headed, purblind egotist, resolved to go on with something unsuitable to his mind, and to insist upon success with all fact and fancy, and nature and art, against him, then it would have been all over with the popularity of the renowned “Boz.” Instead of which, the author’s good sense, self-knowledge, adroitness, and tact, made him clearly see the true state of the case, and the surest remedy ; he accordingly called up to the rescue some old-established favourites, and after introducing Mr. Pickwick to Master Humphrey, and bringing Sam Weller and old Weller into the kitchen beneath the luckless “Clock,” he literally undermined his own failure, and blew it up, as soon as he saw the prospect of a clear field before him. It was well done. The wood-cut at the end of the “Old Curiosity Shop,” in which Master Humphrey is represented seated in his chair, surrounded by elves, fairies, and grotesque spirits—is all very much in the way of Tieck and Hoffman, but out of Mr. Dickens’ way, and he rapidly abandoned it.

In his delightful little book—a better hearted one never issued from the press—called “A Christmas Carol” in *prose*, something of the same kind is again attempted, and certainly with success. In his conception, description, and management of the First and Third of the Spirits that visit Scrooge, there are the true elements of the supernatural world. They are “high German” and first-rate. The allegorical description of the Spirit of the Past, is perfect. As for the jolly Giant, he is a modern Goth. The knocker which changes into Marley’s dead-alive face, and yet remains a knocker, is taken from Hoffman’s “Golden Pot ;” but there is abundance of genuine supernaturalism about him which must have been made on the spot.

Our author is conspicuous for his graphic powers. All his descriptions are good, often excellent ; sometimes, both for minute truths and general effect, perfect. Humorous descriptions are his forte ; and serious description is no less his forte, though he far less often indulges in it. Perhaps it may be said that his *eye* is “worth all his other senses ;” at all events, it is never “made the fool” of the other senses—except where it ought to be so (sympathetically) in describing objects seen through the medium of passion. It will presently be shown that this exception constitutes one of the finest elements, if not the finest element of his genius. But the feature in his writings, now under consideration, is the power he possesses of describing things as they actually exist—in fact, of seeing so much more in a given space and time than people usually do, of copying it down in the words most appropriate to bring it before other minds, and of faithfully recollecting and harmoniously combining his materials. After describing the furniture and decorations of a room—walls—floor, and ceiling—and alluding to two different groups of people, the author carelessly says : “Observing *all this* in the first comprehensive glance with which a stranger surveys a place that is new to him, &c.”* A stranger indeed ! It is well, perhaps, for many “interiors” that every stranger who just pops in his head, does not always see quite so much. The reader may also recollect, perhaps, the entrance of Mrs. Gamp into the sick chamber, who, with one glance round, sees the

* Nicholas Nickleby, vol. i., chap. 32

contents of the room, and the prospect of chimney-pots, and gable-ends, and roofs, and gutters, out at the garret window !*

It is not necessary to make any remark on the descriptions given of the dress and other external appearances of the characters introduced by Mr. Dickens, except to say that he considers such descriptions display the character in all its individuality. He does not distinctly say this, but his opinion incidentally slips out in speaking of the Massachussets' Asylum for the Blind.† He resembles Sir Walter Scott in this respect, and like Scott, he also frequently gives the portrait minutely. Some of the faces of his men are drawn with the tangible truth of Hans Holbein, such as the Yankee agent Scadder,‡ the man with two different profiles—one alive and teeming with palpable rascality, the other like a dead wall with a thief behind it. There is more done, however, in some instances than merely giving the portrait—its expression is given at a critical moment ; and, in one instance, the reflection of expression from face to face is displayed under the influence of strong excitement, in which the very physiology of family characteristics boils up through and above all differences of nature and circumstance, shines out with a light at once noble yet devilish, and culminates on a common centre of passion. The scene is between Ralph, Nicholas, and Kate Nickleby.§

In describing local scenery, Mr. Dickens is generally faithful and minute ; his inventions of scenery are rather (as such things should be) transcripts from memory carefully combined. His "American Notes" have not been valued so much as they deserve, on account of certain manifest exaggerations of travelling scenes (not of sea-faring, for that is all true enough,) and also because the public wanted something more, and something less, they hardly knew what. But if his excellent and humanely-purposed accounts of public institutions do not obtain for these volumes a sufficient regard, the descriptions they contain of American "locations," and of wood-scenery, particularly in canal-traveling, ought to give them a permanent position as historical landscape records to be referred to in future years when

* Martin Chuzzlewit, chap. 25.

‡ Martin Chuzzlewit, chap. 21.

† American Notes, vol. i., chap. 3.

§ Nicholas Nickleby chap. 54.

the face of that great country has become changed. Any one who has travelled in those parts can hardly fail to recognize the perfect truth of these descriptions, many of which must have been copied down on the spot.

Amidst the various sets of somewhat elaborate memoranda, notes, and outlines, from which this essay is written, there are few more numerous in references than our slip of paper headed with "Happy Words and Graphic Phrases." As when the avaricious dotage of the toothless old miser, Arthur Gride, is cheered with a prospect of success, to which he returns no other answer than "a *cackle* of great delight;" as when the placards of a company of strolling players are issued "with letters afflicted with every possible variety of *spinal deformity*;" as when the watery currents "toyed and sported" with the drowned body of Quilp, "now bruising it against the slimy piles, now hiding it in mud or long rank grass, now dragging it heavily over rough stones and gravel, now feigning to yield it to its own element, and in the same action *luring* it away," &c.; as when a set of coffin-lids standing upright, cast their shadows on the wall "like high-shouldered ghosts with their hands in their pockets;" and an old harpsichord in a dusty corner is described by "its *jingling anatomy*;" as when Mr. Pecksniff, overcome with wine, speaks of the vain endeavour to keep down his feelings, "for the more he presses the bolster upon them, the more they look round the corner!" Or, when it is said of one of those wooden figure-heads that adorn ships' bows, and timber yards, that it was "*thrusting* itself forward with that excessively *wide-awake* aspect, and air of somewhat obtrusive politeness by which figure-heads are usually characterized." All these, moreover, tend to establish the statement previously made as to the predominating feature of characterization displayed throughout Mr. Dickens' works, and the consequent difficulty of separating this feature from almost every other, so inwoven is it into the texture of the whole. The first two paragraphs of the chapter which opens with the description of the interior of the house of the miser Gride, for graphic truth and originality, as applied to the endowment of old furniture with the very avariciousness and personal character of their owner, yet without the loss of their own identity as old furniture, or any assistance

from preternatural fancies, are probably without parallel in the literature of this or any other country.*

Mr. Dickens' style is especially the graphic and humorous, by means of which he continually exhibits the most trifling and common-place things in a new and amusing light. Owing to the station in life of the majority of his characters, a colloquial dialect of the respective classes is almost unavoidable; even his narrative style partakes of the same familiarity, and is like telling the listener "all about it;" but no one else ever had the same power of using an abundance of "slang" of all kinds, without offence, and carrying it off, as well as rendering it amusing by the comedy, or tragic force of the scene, and by its unaffected appropriateness to the utterers. Sometimes, however, certain of these licenses are not so fitly taken by the author, where they accidentally slip out of the dialogue into the narrative; nor can good taste approve of the title-page of "Martin Chuzzlewit," which reminds one of some of the old quack and conjuring treatises, servant-maids' dream-books, or marvellous tracts of bigoted biography and old-fashioned rhodomontade. It is unworthy of the work, which, so far as can be judged at present, will probably be its author's most highly-finished production.

The "Sketches by Boz" are, for the most part, rather poor affairs. Except the "Visit to Newgate"—the "Hospital Patient," and the "Death of the Drunkard"—especially the death-bed scene in the second, and the delirium and suicide of the last, which are fearfully truthful and impressive—there are few of the papers which are above mediocrity.

That far higher qualities have been discovered in him, by certain students of literature, not only in England, but on the continent of Europe, than his "Sketches," and the "Pickwick Papers" contain, can hardly admit of doubt; nevertheless a few remarks may be offered in addition to what has previously been said, to explain more popularly the grounds which men of intellect have for "the faith that is in them" with regard to the genius of Mr. Dickens.

So far as a single epithet can convey an impression of the operation of his genius, it may be said that Mr. Dickens is an *instinctive* writer. His best things are

* Nicholas Nickleby, chap. 51.

suddenly revealed to him; he does not search for them in his mind; they come to him; they break suddenly upon him, or drop out of his pen. He does not tax his brain, he transcribes what he finds writing itself there. This is the peculiar prerogative of a true creative genius. His instincts manifest themselves in many subtle ways, both seriously and humorously. Thus; when Lord Verisopht, the foolish young nobleman who has wasted his life in all sorts of utter folly, is on his way to fight a duel which is fated to close his career, it is said that "the fields, trees, gardens, hedges, everything looked very beautiful; the young man scarcely seemed to have noticed them before, though he had passed the same objects a thousand times."* The whole of the passage should be carefully read: it is deeply pathetic. It is as though Nature, whom the foolish young lord had forgotten during his whole life, had gently touched his heart, reminding him that he should take one look at her, thus to refine and sweeten, with her balmy tenderness and truth, the last brief interval of his existence. It should also be remarked that the author calls him "the young man" this once only—previously he was always a scion of nobility—now he is simplified for the grave. No hard study and head-work, no skill in art and writing can produce such things as these. They are the result of a fine instinct identifying itself with given characters, circumstances, and elementary principles. When Sykes hurries homeward with the determination of destroying the girl, it is said that he "never once turned his head to the right or left, or raised his eyes to the sky, or lowered them to the ground, but *looked straight before him*;"† and this will be found to be the invariable characteristic of every fierce physical resolution in advancing towards its object. Before he commits the murder he extinguishes the candle though it is scarce daybreak, but says that "there is light enough for what he has *got to do*"—the tone of expression suggesting a vague notion of some excuse to himself for his contemplated ferocity, as if it were a sort of duty. Allusion may also be made to his not daring to turn his back towards the dead body all the time he remained in the room; to the circumstances attending his flight, and to the conduct of his dog. The same fine in-

* Nicholas Nickleby, chap. 50.

† Oliver Twist, chap. 45.

instinct is displayed, in a different form, in the circumstances preceding the suicide of Ralph Nickleby—the hideous churchyard for the poor—his recollections of having been one of a jury, long before, on the body of a man who had cut his throat, and his looking through the iron railings “wondering which might be his grave;” the set of drunken fellows who were passing, one of whom danced, at which a few bystanders laughed, and one of them looking round in Ralph’s face, he, as if galvanized, echoed the laugh, and when they were gone recollected that the suicide whose grave he had looked for, had been merry when last seen before he had committed the act.* And again, the same instinct manifests itself in a perfectly different mode in the deeply affecting conduct of the old grandfather—deep beyond tears—on the death of Nelly, and also after her death;† and with equal truth and subtlety when Dennis, the hangman, has received sentence of death‡—every word he utters is with the sense of strangulation upon him, and a frantic struggling against visible fate. He “knows by himself” what thoughts are now passing in the mind of the man who is to execute him. Of a humorous kind the instances are too abundant even to be referred to; one or two only shall be noticed. After Mr. Mould, the undertaker, has discoursed about certain prospective funerals, and looked out of his window into a churchyard “with an artist’s eye to the graves,” while sipping a tumbler of punch, he covers his head with a silk handkerchief, and takes *a little nap*§—an expressive comment upon an undertaker’s composed and pleasant idea of death. When “poor Tom Pinch” has lighted old Martin Chuzzlewit with a lanthorn across the fields at night, he immediately blows out the candle for his own return||—prompted, as it seems, by a sensation of no sort of consequence being attached to himself, and unconsciously influenced by the strictly frugal habits of his employer. In speaking to Jonas of a little surprise he contemplated for his daughters (who evidently knew all about it,) Mr. Pecksniff lowers his voice, and treads on tip-toe, though his daughters are two miles off;¶ his sensation actually coinciding with an imaginative impulse derived from his own lie. One more: the unfor-

* Nicholas Nickleby, chap. 62.

† Barnaby Rudge, chap. 76.

‡ Ibid., chap. 24.

+ The Old Curiosity Shop, chaps. 71, 72.

§ Martin Chuzzlewit, chap. 25.

¶ Ibid., chap. 20.

fortunate Smike having been caught by Squeers, and brought to the house of Mr. Snawley, who is at supper, the latter declares "it is clear that there has been a Providence in it,"—and this he utters casting his eyes down with an air of humility, and elevating his fork with a bit of lobster on the top of it, towards the ceiling. "Providence is against him, no doubt," replied Mr. Squeers, scratching his nose. "Of course, that was to be expected." Mr. Snawley then addressing the detestable Mr. Squeers, makes the moral reflection that "Hard-heartedness and evil doing will never prosper." "Never was such a thing known," rejoined Squeers, taking a roll of notes from his pocket-book to see that they were all safe.* Let no lover of fun suppose that the ludicrous circumstances of this dialogue are merely introduced to produce a laugh at the graphic absurdity: they mark the hypocrisy and the total absence of any real sense of Providence, in these two scoundrels, while the last action of Squeers betrays a sudden instinctive consciousness, if not of his own villany, at least of the consequences which sometimes ensue on such doings as his.

Now, it may be said, that Mr. Dickens does not perhaps intend all this, which has been regarded as the workings of a fine instinctive faculty—that such things are accidental—that he is not conscious of such inferences himself, nor troubles his head about them, and that the critic is playing the part of Mr. Curdle, who wrote a long treatise to inquire whether the nurse's husband in *Romeo and Juliet*, really *was* "a merry man," which seemed doubtful from the fact of the one slender joke recorded of him. Possibly; and if Mr. Dickens can write so suggestively by accident, "happy man be his dole." The trial scene of the Jew Fagin is full of these wonderful "accidents." Howbeit, there are the fiction-facts; and there the critic's comments; the reader can settle the question to his own mind. It may, however, be observed that if such inferences were the mere invention or fancy of the present essayist, similar things would occur to him in reading the works of other novelists and writers of fiction. But they seldom do, except with the greatest writers, and with no others of the present time, in an equal degree. The

* *Nicholas Nickleby*, chap. 38.

very names given to so many characters—names which express the nature or peculiarity of the individual, and which are at once original, eccentric, humorous, and truthful,—would serve to prove that such a number of happy “hits” could never have been made unintentionally. But this unconsciousness of the operation of their own genius, which was perhaps the case with nearly all the great writers of former times, hardly applies now with any force in our age of constant analysis and critical disquisition. During the actual moments of composition a great inventive genius will of course be forgetful of himself, and *how* he works, and *where* it all comes from; but to succeed in these days, with any chance of posterity, an author must know well what he is about. Some of the details of his execution may fairly bear more appropriate inferences than a man of genius literally intended; will continually do so; but all such things in Mr. Dickens, and in other novelists and dramatists, are the spontaneous offspring of a mind that has started upon a well-understood course, and a nervous system that *lives in* the characters and scenes of imaginative creation.

Under the head of “instinctive writing” must also be classed those subtle intuitions which are the peculiar, and perhaps, exclusive prerogative of a fine inventive genius. He describes (in “*Oliver Twist*”) very remarkable phenomena sometimes attending sleep as well as stupor, when objects of the external senses partially obtain admission, and are perceived by the dreaming mind; representing a condition of knowledge without power, as though a foot were on either shore of the worlds of vision and reality, the soul being conscious of both, and even of its own anomalous state. This, however, he may have experienced; as, in like manner, what he describes (in the “*American Notes*”) of the peculiar delirium and forlorn brain-wandering sometimes induced by prolonged sea-sickness. His portraiture of a heart-breaking twilight condition of fatuity, brought on by age, and want, and misery, are stronger cases in point, yet these he might have witnessed. But he can have no actual experience either in his own person or that of others, of what emotions and thoughts are busy in the innermost recesses of the body and soul of the perpetrator of the worst crimes—of the man condemned for death, of the suicide, and of those who are

actually in the last struggle. Yet everybody of ordinary imagination and sensibility has felt the vital truth of these descriptions, the home-stinging whisper, or loud cry, of Nature within his being, as he read them.

Of the tragic power, the pathos, and tenderness contained in various parts of Mr. Dickens' works, many examples have already been given, nor can space be afforded for more than a brief reference to one or two more. Nothing can be more striking than the last scenes in the lives of Hugh, of Dennis, and of Barnaby Rudge, each so different, yet so true to the character—the first so suggestive of barbaric greatness and sad waste of energies—the second so overwhelming in physical apprehensions, and revolting in abject wretchedness—the last so full of motley melancholy, resigned yet hopeless, a sweetness above despair, a brain for once blessed by an imbecility that places him beyond the cruel world, and meekly smiling at all its "capital" laws. The trial scene of Fagin is a master-piece of tragic genius. There are many little incidents in our author's works of the same kind as the following:—When the poor, maltreated, half-starved boys all run away from the Yorkshire school, "some were found crying under hedges, and in such places, frightened at the solitude. One had a dead bird in a little cage; he had wandered nearly twenty miles, and when his poor favourite died, lost courage, and lay down beside him." During the riots described in Barnaby Rudge (chapter 77)—"One young man was hanged in Bishopsgate-street, whose aged grey-headed father waited for him at the gallows, kissed him at its foot when he arrived, and sat there on the ground till they took him down. They would have given him the body of his child; but he had no hearse, no coffin, nothing to remove it in, being too poor; and walked meekly away beside the cart that took it back to prison, trying as he went to touch its lifeless hand." Words—few as they are—of heart-breaking humanity, the only comment upon which must be a silent, scalding tear. The death of Nelly, and her burial, are well-known scenes, of deep pathetic beauty.

A curious circumstance is observable in a great portion of the scenes last mentioned, which it is possible may have been the result of harmonious accident, and the author not even subsequently fully conscious of it. It

is that they are written in blank verse, of irregular metre and rhythms, which Southey and Shelley, and some other poets have occasionally adopted. The passage properly divided into lines, will stand thus,—

NELLY'S FUNERAL.

And now the bell—the bell
 She had so often heard by night and day,
 And listened to with solemn pleasure,
 E'en as a living voice—
 Rung its remorseless toll for her,
 So young, so beautiful, so good.

Decrepit age, and vigorous life,
 And blooming youth, and helpless infancy,
 Poured forth—on crutches, in the pride of strength
 And health, in the full blush
 Of promise, the mere dawn of life—
 To gather round her tomb. Old men were there,
 Whose eyes were dim
 And senses failing—
 Grandames, who might have died ten years ago,
 And still been old—the deaf, the blind, the lame,
 The palsied,
 The living dead in many shapes and forms,
 To see the closing of this early grave.

What was the death it would shut in,
 To that which still could crawl and creep above it!
 Along the crowded path they bore her now;
 Pure as the new-fallen snow
 That covered it; whose day on earth
 Had been as fleeting.

Under that porch, where she had sat when Heaven
 In mercy brought her to that peaceful spot,
 She passed again, and the old church
 Received her in its quiet shade.

Throughout the whole of the above only two unimportant words have been omitted,—*in* and *its*; “grandames” has been substituted for “grandmothers,” and “e'en” for “almost.” All that remains is exactly as in the original, not a single word transposed, and the punctuation the same to a comma. The brief homily that concludes the funeral is profoundly beautiful.

Oh! it is hard to take to heart
 The lesson that such deaths will teach,
 But let no man reject it,
 For it is one that all must learn,
 And is a mighty, universal truth.
 When death strikes down the innocent and young,
 For every fragile form from which he lets
 The parting spirit free,
 A hundred virtues rise,
 In shapes of mercy, charity, and love,
 To walk the world and bless it
 Of every tear
 That sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves,
 Some good is born, some gentler nature comes.

Not a word of the original is changed in the above quotation, which is worthy of the best passages in Wordsworth, and thus, meeting on the common ground of a deeply truthful sentiment, the two most unlike men in the literature of the country are brought into the closest approximation. Something of a similar kind of versification in the prose may be discovered in Chap. 77 of "Barnaby Rudge." The following is from the concluding paragraph of "Nicholas Nickleby :"—

The grass was green above the dead boy's grave,
Trodden by feet so small and light,
That not a daisy drooped its head
Beneath their pressure.
Through all the spring and summer time
Garlands of fresh flowers, wreathed by infant hands,
Rested upon the stone.

Such are the "kindly admixtures," as Charles Lamb calls the union of serious and comic characters and scenes in Hogarth, which are to be found in abundance throughout the works of Mr. Dickens. Following up his remark, Lamb adds that "in the drama of real life no such thing as pure tragedy is to be found; but merriment and infelicity, ponderous crime, and feather-like variety," &c. Surely this is not sound as a theory of art? Pure tragedy is to be found in the drama of real life, if nothing else intervenes at the moment, or the principles are all too absorbed and *abstracted* to be conscious of the presence of anything else. Pure tragedy, therefore, exists in nature, as well as in art; and ideal art obtains it by stopping short all interference, and keeping the separation absolute. Another point of art of a different kind is in the fit and harmonious admixture of the opposite elements of tragedy and comedy, and a fine artist never confounds the two, or brings them into abrupt and offensive contrast and revulsion. Intermediate shades and gradations are always given. It is one of Mr. Dickens' greatest merits, that notwithstanding his excessive love of the humorous, he never admits any pleasantries into a tragic scene, nor suffers a levity to run mischievously across the current of any deep emotion in a way to injure its just appreciation. In this respect he is the direct converse of Thomas Ingoldsby, who not only mixes jests inextricably with horrors, but makes fun of the very horrors themselves—not ghost stories, nor burlesques, are here meant, but murderous deaths of men, women, and children. Rare subjects for fun!

A pure feeling of religion, and a noble spirit of Christian charity and active benevolence is apparent in all appropriate places throughout the works of Charles Dickens. After describing the poor girl born blind, deaf, and dumb, whom he saw in the Massachusetts' Asylum, at Boston, and about whose course of life, education, and present state he excites so lively an interest, he concludes with a striking passage.* The same principles and feelings are also apparent in various incidental, and perhaps scarcely conscious side-hits and humorous touches which occur in the progress of the narratives or dialogues—as, for instance, where Sykes' dog is shown to entertain so very Christian-like an un-Christianity in his behaviour, and the sentiments he entertains with regard to other dogs. It is amusing to see how all this puzzles the Italian translator, who says the passage must have a hidden meaning—"un senso nascoso."

As a general summary of the result of Mr. Dickens' works, it might be said that they contain a larger number of faithful pictures and records of the middle and lower classes of England of the present period, than can be found in any other modern works; and that while they communicate very varied, and frequently very squalid and hideous knowledge concerning the lower, and the most depraved classes, and without the least compromise of the true state of men and things, the author nevertheless manages so skilfully that they may be read from beginning to end without a single offence to true and unaffected delicacy. Moreover, they tend on the whole to bring the poor into the fairest position for obtaining the sympathy of the rich and powerful, by displaying the goodness and fortitude often found amidst want and wretchedness, together with the intervals of joyousness and comic humour. As Hazlitt says of Hogarth, that "he doubles the quantity of our experience," so may it be said of Dickens, with the additional circumstance, that all the knowledge of "life" which he communicates is so tempered and leavened, that it will never assist a single reader to become a heartless misanthrope, nor a scheming "man of the world."

At the commencement of this paper a comparison

* American Notes, vol. i., pp. 103, 104.

was instituted between Hogarth and Mr. Dickens. Dropping that comparison, the examination of the works of the latter has continued down to this point by dealing solely with the works themselves, as much as if no others of the same or of similar class existed. In a philosophical and elementary sense comparisons are always inevitable to the formation of our judgments; not so, the bad system of always lugging in such extraneous and too often "odious" assistances. But we think we have fairly earned the right of doing something of this kind in conclusion; and perhaps it may be expected of us.

Mr. Dickens has often been compared with Scott, with Fielding, and Le Sage. He is not at all like Scott, whose materials are derived from histories and traditions, as shown by his elaborate notes to every chapter—all worked up with consummate skill. Mr. Dickens has no notes derived from books or records, but from a most retentive memory and subtle associations; and all this he works up by the aid of an inventive genius, and by genuine impulse rather than art. Scott and Fielding are great designers of plot and narrative. Dickens evidently works upon no plan; he has a leading idea, but no design at all. He knows well what he is going to *do* in the main, but how he will do this, it is quite clear he leaves to the impulse of composition. He moves in no fixed course, but takes the round of nature as it comes. He imposes no restraints upon himself as to method or map; his genius cannot bear the curb, but goes dancing along the high road, and bolts *ad libitum*. (It is not to be admired.) He is like Scott and Fielding in the fleshly solidity, costume, and completeness of his external portraitures. He is also like Fielding in some of his best internal portraitures. Scott does very little in that way. The Preface to the French translation of "Nicholas Nickleby" says of it, "Ce livre est un panorama mouvant de toutes les classes de la société Anglaise; un critique fine et piquante de tous les ridicules, une vaste composition à la manière de 'Gil Blas,' où mille personnages divers se meuvent et posent devant le lecteur." This is quite true as to the method of working out their ideas; but with this moving panorama of divers classes, and the excellent delineation of character, all resemblance ceases. The tendency of the great and too delightful work of Le Sage,

is to give us a contempt for our species, and to show that dishonesty and cunning are the best policy. The power over the grotesque and the pathetic, displayed by Cervantes, added to his love of beauty in pastoral scenes, and to his deep-heartedness, offers a far closer and more worthy comparison; although we are aware that our author is not so poetical and elevated as Cervantes, nor would he have been likely to delineate such a character as Don Quixote—who comprises within himself the *true* flower and consummation of the chivalrous spirit, with its utter absurdity and end. But except in this one character, these two authors have a close affinity in genius. Mr. Dickens is not like Gay. "The Beggar's Opera" was written to be *sung*; it is a poetical satire; its heroes are idealized; their vice and theft do not shock in the least; and people nod their heads to the *burthen* of "Tyburn Tree," because it is only a song and satire which hangs upon it. The gallows of the "Beggar's Opera" was not meant for poor, base thieves; it was a flight far above the rags of "beggars"—it was meant for "better company!" Not so with the thieves and fine gentlemen of Mr. Dickens. The men and things he deals with he means actually as he calls them; the only exception to their reality is that they represent classes; the best of them are never mechanical matter-of-fact portraits. It is this closeness to reality, so that what he describes has the same effect upon the internal sense as *thinking of reality*, that renders Dickens very like De Foe; not omitting the power over the pathetic and grotesque also possessed by both. Yet with all these resemblances, Mr. Dickens is an original inventor, and has various peculiarities, the entire effect of which renders his works, as wholes, unlike those of any other writer.

Mr. Dickens is manifestly the product of his age. He is a genuine emanation from its aggregate and entire spirit. He is not an imitator of any one. He mixes extensively in society, and continually. Few public meetings in a benevolent cause are without him. He speaks effectively—humorously, at first, and then seriously to the point. His reputation, and all the works we have discussed, are the extraordinary product of only eight years. Popularity and success, which injure so many men in head and heart, have improved him in all respects. His influence upon his age is ex-

tensive—pleasurable, instructive, healthy, reformatory. If his "Christmas Carol" were printed in letters of gold, there would be no inscriptions which would give a more salutary hint to the gold of a country. As for posterity, let no living man pronounce upon it; but if an opinion may be offered, it would be that the earlier works of Mr Dickens—the "Sketches by Boz," and some others—will die natural deaths; but that his best productions, such as "Nicholas Nickleby," the "Old Curiosity Shop," "Oliver Twist," and "Martin Chuzzlewit," will live as long as our literature endures, and take rank with the works of Cervantes, of Hogarth, and De Foe.

Mr. Dickens is, in private, very much what might be expected from his works—by no means an invariable coincidence. He talks much or little according to his sympathies. His conversation is genial. He hates argument; in fact, he is unable to argue—a common case with impulsive characters who see the whole truth, and feel it crowding and struggling at once for immediate utterance. He never talks for effect, but for the truth or for the fun of the thing. He tells a story admirably, and generally with humorous exaggerations. His sympathies are of the broadest, and his literary tastes appreciate all excellence. He is a great admirer of the poetry of Tennyson. Mr. Dickens has singular personal activity, and is fond of games of practical skill. He is also a great walker, and very much given to dancing Sir Roger de Coverley. In private, the general impression of him is that of a first-rate practical intellect, with "no nonsense" about him. Seldom, if ever, has any man been more beloved by contemporary authors, and by the public of his time.

Translations are regularly made in Germany of all Mr. Dickens' works. They are quite as popular there as with us. The high reputation of the Germans for their faithfulness and general excellence as translators, is well supported in some of these versions; and in others that reputation is perilled. Bad abbreviations, in which graphic or humorous descriptions are omitted, and the characteristics of dialogue unnecessarily avoided, are far from commendable. No one could expect that the Italian "Oliviero Twist," of Giambatista Basseggio, published in Milan, would be, in all respects, far better than one of the most popular versions of that

work in Leipzig. But such is the fact. Some of the French translations are very good, particularly the "Nicolas Nickleby" of E. de la Bédollière, which is admirably done. Mr. Dickens also "lives" in Dutch, and some of his works are, we believe, translated into Russian.

LORD ASHLEY

AND

DR. SOUTHWOOD SMITH.

"And ye, my Lordés, with your alliaunce,
And other faithful people that there be,
Trust I to God, shall quench all this noisaunce,
And set this lande in high prosperitie."—CHAUCER.

"To plunge into the infection of hospitals ; to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain ; to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt ; to remember the forgotten, and to attend to the neglected."—BURKE.

"Trace the forms
Of atoms moving with incessant change
Their elemental round ; behold the seeds
Of being, and the energy of life
Kindling the mass with ever-active flame,
Then to the secrets of the working mind
Attentive turn."—AKENSIDE.

"Yet much remains
To conquer still : peace hath her victories
No less renown'd than war."—MILTON.

THE spirit of the philosophy of antiquity offers a striking contrast to that of the present age in the tendency of the latter to diffuse itself among the people. In the whole range of scientific or demonstrable knowledge which has been grasped by human intelligence, we have now nothing approaching to the old Esoteric and Exoteric doctrine. With results at least as brilliant as those which have distinguished any former age, the instruments of induction and experiment continue to be used to extend the boundaries of knowledge ; but that which no former age has witnessed is the energy which is now put forth to make the doctrines of science known and to teach the masses how to apply them to their advantage. The men at present in possession of the key of knowledge, value it chiefly as it enables them to unlock treasures for universal diffusion, and estimate their own claim to distinction and honour by the measure in which they have enriched the world. This spirit is strongly exemplified in the writings of Dr. South-

wood Smith, and the course of his public life. By nature and education he seems to have been formed rather for the retirement and contemplation of the study, than the active business of the world. The bent of his mind led him at an unusually early age to the investigation of the range of subjects that relate more or less directly to intellectual and moral philosophy; and, as not unfrequently happens, the efforts of those around him to give to his pursuits a widely different direction only increased his love for these studies.

Having determined on the practice of medicine as a profession, Dr. Southwood Smith found in the sciences which now demanded his attention, and still more in the structure and functions of organized beings, studies congenial to his taste, and for which his previous intellectual pursuits and habits had prepared him. The contemplation of the wonderful processes which constitute life, the exquisite mechanism, as far as that mechanism can be traced by which they are performed, the surprising adjustments and harmonies by which in a creature like man such diverse and opposite actions are brought into relation with each other and made to work in subserviency and co-operation, and the Divine object of all—the communication of sensation and intelligence as the inlets and instruments of happiness, afforded the highest satisfaction to his mind. But this beautiful world, into whose intimate workings his eye now searched, presented itself to his view as a demonstration that the Creative Power is infinite in goodness, and seemed to afford, as if from the essential elements and profoundest depths of nature, a proof of His love. Under these impressions, he wrote, in 1814, during the intervals of his college studies, the “Divine Government,” a work which at once brought him into notice and established his reputation as an original and eloquent writer. It has now gone through many editions, and has been widely circulated, and read with the deepest interest by persons of all classes and creeds; there is nothing sectarian in it; dealing only with great and universal principles, it comprehends humanity and in some respects indeed the whole sensitive and organic creation. The style is singularly lucid; its tone is earnest, rising frequently into strains of touching and pathetic eloquence; a heartfelt conviction of the truth of every thought that is put into words breathes through-

out the whole, and a buoyant and youthful spirit pervades it, imparting to it a charm which so rivets the attention of the reader as to render him in many instances unable to put down the book till finished, as if he had been engaged in an exciting novel. Had the work been written at a maturer age, some of this charm must have vanished, and given place to a deeper consciousness of the woe and pain that mingle with the joys of the present state. But as it is, it has been no unimportant instrument in the hands of those among whom it has chanced to fall, in keeping distinctly before the view the greater happiness, as an end, to the attainment of which, pain is so often the direct and only means. Many instances are on record of the solace it has communicated to the mourner, and the hope it has inspired in the mind when on the brink of despair. While divines of the church have read and expressed their approbation of it, it has attracted the attention of some of the most distinguished poets of the day : Byron and Moore have recorded their admiration of it, and it appears to have been the constant companion of Crabbe and to have soothed and brightened his last moments.

After the completion of his medical terms, Dr. Southwood Smith spent several years in the practice of his profession at a provincial town in the west of England, near his place of birth, and in the midst of a small but highly cultivated and affectionate circle of friends, devoting himself with unabated ardour to his favourite studies. On his removal to London, he attached himself to one of the great metropolitan hospitals, that he might enlarge his experience in his profession. He was soon appointed physician to the Eastern Dispensary, and in a few years afterwards, to the London Fever Hospital. Called upon by the latter appointment to treat on so large a scale one of the most formidable diseases which the physician has to encounter, he applied himself to its study with a zeal not to be abated by two attacks of the malady in his own person, so severe that his life on each occasion was despaired of. The result of several years' laborious investigation is given in his "Treatise on Fever," which was at once pronounced to be "one of the most able of the philosophical works that have aided the advancement of the science of medicine during the last half century;" and its reputation has risen with time. It has had a wide

circulation on the continent, over India and in America, in the medical schools of which it has become a text book, while in this country high medical authority has pronounced it to be "the best work on fever that ever flowed from the pen of physician in any age or country."

Dr. Southwood Smith assisted in the formation of the Westminster Review, and wrote the article on "Education" in the first number. For many years he was a regular contributor, and it was here that his paper on the state of the Anatomical Schools first appeared, which attracted so much attention that it was re-printed in form of a pamphlet, under the title of "The Use of the Dead to the Living." In this form it passed through several editions, and a copy was sent to every member of both houses of Parliament. The evils that must necessarily result to the country by withholding from the medical profession the means of obtaining anatomical and physiological knowledge were so clearly pointed out in this pamphlet, and the perils inseparable from the permission of such a class as the resurrection-men, (the most horrible results of which were soon afterwards actually realised,) so forcibly depicted, while at the same time a remedy adequate to meet the difficulties of the case was suggested and explained, that the Legislature was induced to take up the subject, and after appointing a Committee of Inquiry, to pass the existing law, which has put an effectual stop to the trade of body-snatching and the horrible crime of Burking: but, unfortunately, from a defect in the act, the anatomical schools are often placed, though quite unnecessarily, in a state of considerable embarrassment.

Dr. Smith laboured with equal earnestness, but less success, to obtain a revision of the present regulations concerning Quarantine, which he regards as unworthy of a country that has made any progress in science, having their origin in ignorance and superstition worthy of the middle ages; aiming at an object which is altogether chimerical, and which, if it had any real existence, would be just as much beyond human power as the control of the force and direction of the winds. Yet these regulations are still allowed grievously to embarrass commerce, at the cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds annually.

The articles on "Physiology and Medicine" in the early numbers of the Penny Cyclopædia are from the

pen of this author, and the success of the treatise on "Animal Physiology," written at the request of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, suggested the idea of treating this subject in a still more elaborate and comprehensive manner, and led to the publication of the "Philosophy of Health." The first words of the introduction to this work thus express the comprehensive nature of the subject which it embraces:—

"The object of the present work is to give a brief and plain account of the structure and functions of the Body, chiefly with reference to health and disease. This is intended to be introductory to an account of the constitution of the Mind, chiefly with reference to the development and direction of its powers."

The two volumes already published, aim at establishing a series of general rules for health, (the word "health" being applied in its widest sense,) by popularly explaining the nature of the *substances* of which the physical part of man is compounded; describing the various *structures* and *organs* of the body, and the different functions they perform; and deducing thence the laws which the creature is enjoined by the principles of its creation to obey. This is merely the basis of a higher philosophy, which rising from the physical, shall, in regular sequence, proceed to the mental, trace their mutual relation and dependence, and endeavour to deduce from the exposition of the nature of each—as far as their nature can be comprehended by mortal intelligence—the rules for the utmost development and progression of both.

The first volume comprises a most interesting view of life in all organized bodies, commencing from an imperceptible germ, and ascending from the lichen on the rock, to man himself. The distinction between the two great divisions of organized life, between that which only grows—the organic, and that which not only grows, but moves and feels—the animal superadded to the organic—is traced with the hand of a master. Equally masterly is the rapid view of the means adopted to render voluntary motion possible; the complication of structure requisite to that one faculty; the apparatus constructed to produce sensation; the elevation of every faculty down to the lowest, by the addition of each higher faculty; the indispensable necessity and uses of pain not only to health, but to life itself; and the indication of the processes by which nature

trains the mind to perceive and think. The concluding passage of this portion of the work is one of remarkable power, in which a general view is exhibited of the physiological progress of a human being, from its first appearance in the embryo state, until the final extinction of life, and the subjection of the inanimate body to the material laws which are to decompose it. Expositions of the functions of circulation, digestion, and nutrition follow, equally characterized by fullness, and conciseness.

The style of this work is distinguished by terseness and simplicity; it would be difficult to find a useless word, and very few epithets are employed, as though the number and variety of ideas to be imparted rendered condensation essential: in the arrangement there is great precision, subject after subject arising gradually and naturally. Few technical terms are employed, and a full explanation is given to those which are introduced. A perfect command of the subject is evinced throughout; and its exposition is at once profound and simple, calculated alike to instruct the ignorant, and by the striking nature of the descriptions and the novelty of their applications, to interest even those to whom the facts are not new. Much of the matter contained in these volumes is original, and even that which is taken out of the common treasury of science is disposed in a new manner, and exhibited in new relations of great interest and importance. Scattered phenomena which might be culled out of various works on Anatomy, Physiology, and mental Philosophy, are here brought together and systematized; displayed as a series, traced from their germs, and followed onwards to their highest manifestations; arranged so as to show their relation to one another, and their influence one on the other, thence deducing the means of developing the united powers towards their utmost point of progression.

Many felicitous instances of scientific generalization and of eloquent description and appeal might be referred to in exemplification. It has been well said by a philosophical reviewer, that the "Natural History of Death, as a composition, has much of that singular and melancholy beauty wherewith a painter of genius would invest the personification of mortality." The following appeal to mothers has been compared to the

fervid eloquence of Rousseau, which aroused women to a sense of the physical obligations of the maternal character; but here the earnest call is for mental and moral exertion:—

“I appeal to every woman whose eye may rest on these pages. I ask of you, what has ever been done for you to enable you to understand the physical and mental constitution of that human nature, the care of which is imposed on you? In what part of the course of your education was instruction of this kind introduced? Over how large a portion of your education did it extend? Who were your teachers? What have you profited by their lessons? What progress have you made in the acquisition of the requisite information? Were you at this moment to undertake the guidance of a new-born infant to health, knowledge, goodness, and happiness, how would you set about the task? How would you regulate the influence of external agents upon its delicate, tender, and highly irritable organs, in such a manner as to obtain from them healthful stimulation, and avoid destructive excitement? What natural and moral objects would you select as the best adapted to exercise and develop its opening faculties? What feelings would you check, and what cherish? How would you excite aims; how would you apply motives? How would you avail yourself of pleasure as a final end, or as the means to some further end? And how would you deal with the no less formidable instrument of pain? What is your own physical, intellectual, and moral state, as especially fitting you for this office? What is the measure of your own self-control, without a large portion of which no human being ever yet exerted over the infant mind any considerable influence for good?”

This earnest passage at once serves to give an idea of the style of the work and to explain one of its chief aims; and with it the present short account of the “Philosophy of Health” must conclude, but not before a hope has been expressed that an undertaking so important and so well begun, will not much longer be left unfinished.

Dr. Southwood Smith was the friend and physician of Bentham. The venerable and unaffected philanthropist, fully appreciating the importance of anatomical science, and lamenting the prejudice against dissection, gave his own body to Dr. Smith, charging him to devote it to the ordinary purposes of science. His friend fulfilled his desire, and delivered the first lecture over the body—with a clear and unfaltering voice, but with a face as white as that of the dead philosopher before him. Alive, so cheerful and serene—serene for ever now, and nothing more. The lecture was delivered on the 9th of June, 1832, in the Webb-street School of Anatomy. Dr. Smith availed himself of the occasion to give a view of the fundamental principles of Bentham’s philosophy, and an account of his last moments. Most of the particular friends and disciples of the deceased were present on the occasion, and his bi-

ographer has made this lecture the concluding part of the Memoir which has been prefixed to the uniform Edition of Bentham's works just published. The head and face were preserved by a peculiar process, but the latter being found painful in expression, is covered with a wax mask admirably executed and a correct likeness. The skeleton also was preserved ; and the whole clothed in the ordinary dress worn by the philosopher (according to his own express desire) presenting him as nearly as possible as he was while living. Seated smiling in a large mahogany case with a glass front, the homely figure, with its long snow-white hair, broad-brimmed hat, and thick ash-plant walking-stick, *resides* with Dr. Southwood Smith, and may be seen by any one who takes an interest in the writings and character of Jeremy Bentham.

Lord Ashley, the eldest son of the Earl of Shaftsbury, and member for Dorsetshire, commenced his career in that cause with which his public life has become identified, by undertaking the charge of Mr. Sadler's Factory Bill in the house of Commons. The invention of the spinning-jenny and the power-loom not only altered the whole process of manufacture, but withdrew the operatives from their own dwellings, and collected them in numbers in great buildings called Factories. The invention of machinery was attended with another result ; it created a demand for the comparatively inexpensive labour of children, their small fingers being found best adapted to work in combination with it. Very young children, of both sexes, were therefore employed in great numbers, together with adult labourers, and as their servants, and were moreover compelled to work the same number of hours whether those amounted to twelve, fourteen, or sixteen, or even all night. It was alleged that children of tender ages placed under these unnatural circumstances were grievously and irreparably injured in their physical constitution ; that they were cruelly treated by their task-masters ; that their morals were early corrupted ; that they were growing up in a state of absolute ignorance. It was universally admitted that the efforts which the Legislature had hitherto made for their protection had failed, and every existing enactment become a dead letter. It was in this state of things that Lord Ashley, in 1833, took charge of Mr. Sadler's Bill, the object of which was to limit the hours

of work, of all under eighteen, in Factories, to ten hours daily. This was met by the objection that such a measure must necessarily put the same limit on the labour of adults. A Commission was accordingly appointed ; first to ascertain the facts of the case as regarded the children, and, secondly, to enquire whether it would not be practicable to devise a measure for the protection of children without interfering with the liberty of all the operatives. Fifteen commissioners were appointed and divided into five sections, each consisting of three Commissioners (two civil and one medical) and of these Mr. Thomas Tooke, Mr. Chadwick, and Dr. Southwood Smith, formed the Central Board, to direct the inquiry and report the result. Their report was :—

“That the children employed in all the principal branches of manufacture throughout the kingdom work the same number of hours as the adults ; that the effects of such labour, in great numbers of instances, are permanent deterioration of the physical constitution, the production of disease, often wholly irremediable, and the exclusion by means of excessive fatigue from the means of obtaining education. That children at the ages when they suffer these injuries not being free agents, but let out to hire, their wages being appropriated by their parents, therefore a case is made out for the interference of the legislature in their behalf.”

The Factory Act of 1833 was founded on this Report, and four Inspectors and a considerable number of Sub-Inspectors were appointed to enforce obedience to its enactments. The results are highly important.

The existing Act which fixes the youngest age at which children can be employed, and the extent of their hours of labour, and which requires education as a condition of employment, is (unlike its predecessors) obeyed ; and although the clause in the Bill prepared by the Commissioners providing for the erection of schools and the payment of teachers, was struck out in the House of Lords, on the motion of the Earl of Shaftsbury, Lord Ashley's father, yet with all its imperfections the present Act has led to an amelioration in the treatment and an improvement in the physical condition and moral character of this vast juvenile population, such as was never before effected by an Act of Parliament ; while the benefits resulting from it to all parties, the employers no less than the employed, are not only rapidly multiplying and extending, but are becoming more and more the subjects of general acknowledgment and gratulation. There is reason to believe that the

total number employed in factory labour in the United Kingdom is little short of 1,000,000.*

New fields of labour had opened to Lord Ashley at every step of his progress. He had already earned the honourable designation of the general guardian of the children of the poor, as the Lord Chancellor is of the children of the rich. He was satisfied that there were oppressions and sufferings of an aggravated character, and on a large scale, in occupations widely different from those of the factory, and which required investigation the more because the places of work, in which some of the most important of these employments are carried on, are wholly inaccessible to the public. The apprehension inseparable from a mind, at once earnest and diffident, that he should fail to elicit the truth, and to place it so strongly before the public and the legislature, as to command attention and to ensure a remedy for any proved grievance, was strongly marked in the opening of his speech on the 4th of August, 1840, for the appointment of a "Commission of Inquiry into the employment of Children in Mines, Collieries, and other occupations not regulated by the Factory Acts."

"It is, Sir," said he, "with feelings somewhat akin to despair, that I now rise to bring before this House, the motion of which I have given notice. I cannot but entertain misgivings, that I shall not be able to bring under the attention of the House this subject, which has now occupied so large a portion of my public life, and in which *are concentrated in one hour, the labours of years*. I have long contemplated this effort which I am now making; I had long resolved that, so soon as I could see the Factory children, as it were, safe in harbour, I would undertake a new task. . . . I am now endeavouring to obtain an inquiry into the actual circumstances and condition of another large part of our juvenile population. . . . I wish," continued he, "to preserve and cherish the physical energies of these poor children, and to cultivate and improve their moral part, both of which, be they taken separately or conjointly, are essential to the peace, security, and progress of the empire. . . . It is instructive to observe, how we compel, as it were, vice and misery with one hand, and endeavour to repress them with the other; but the whole course of our manufacturing system tends to these results; you engage children from their earliest and tenderest years in these long, painful, and destructive occupations; when they have approached to manhood, they have out-grown their employments, and they are turned upon the world without moral, without professional education; the business they have learned avails them nothing; to

* From a Return furnished by Mr. Sanders, one of the Factory Inspectors, it appears that in his district alone, which is by no means one of the largest the total number employed in Factory labour is, 106,509. Among these there are 45,958 young persons and children coming under the regulations of the Factory Act. It appears, further, that while there were before the present Act, as far as the Inspector could learn, only two schools in his whole district, at which about 200 children may have been educated, the actual number at present attending schools is 9316. The Factory Act has diminished the number of young children and increased that of adults

what can they turn their hands for a maintenance?—the children, for instance, who have been taught to make pins, having reached fourteen or fifteen years of age, are unfit to make pins any longer; to procure an honest livelihood then becomes to them almost impossible; the governors of prisons will tell you, the relieving officers will tell you, that the vicious resort to plunder and prostitution; the rest sink down into a hopeless pauperism. I desire to remove these spectacles of suffering and oppression from the eyes of the poorer classes, or at least to ascertain if we can do so: these things perplex the peaceable, and exasperate the discontented; they have a tendency to render capital odious, for wealth is known to them only by its oppressions; they judge of it by what they see immediately around them; they know but little beyond their own narrow sphere; they do not extend their view over the whole surface of the land, and so perceive and understand the compensating advantages that wealth and property bestow on the community at large. Sir, with so much ignorance on one side, and so much oppression on the other, I have never wondered that perilous errors and bitter hatreds have prevailed; but I have wondered much, and been very thankful that they have prevailed so little.”

Lord Ashley concluded by declaring that it was his object to appeal to, and excite public opinion, “for where we cannot legislate,” said he, “we may exhort; and laws may fail where example will succeed.”

“I must appeal to the Bishops and Ministers of the Church of England, nay, more, to the Ministers of every denomination, to urge on the hearts of their hearers, the mischief and the danger of these covetous and cruel practices; I trust they will not fall short of the zeal and eloquence of a distinguished prelate in a neighbouring country, who, in these beautiful and emphatic words, exhorted his hearers to justice and mercy: ‘Open your eyes,’ said the Prince Archbishop Primate of Normandy, ‘and behold; parents and masters demand of these young plants to produce fruit in the season of blossoms. By excessive and prolonged labour they exhaust the rising sap, caring but little that they leave them to vegetate and perish on a withered and tottering stem. Poor little children! may the laws hasten to extend their protection over your existence, and *may posterity read with astonishment, on the front of this age, so satisfied with itself, that in these days of progress and discovery, there was needed an iron law to forbid the murder of children by excessive labour.*’ . . . My grand object is to bring these children within reach of education. I will say, though possibly I may be charged with cant and hypocrisy, that I have been bold enough to undertake this task, because I must regard the objects of it as beings created, as ourselves, by the same Maker, redeemed by the same Saviour, and destined to the same immortality; and it is, therefore, in this spirit, and with these sentiments, that I now venture to entreat the countenance of this House, and the co-operation of Her Majesty’s Ministers; first to investigate, and ultimately to remove, these sad evils, which press so deeply and so extensively on such a large and interesting portion of the human race.”

This appeal, distinguished throughout by an earnest simplicity of language, was answered by the cordial support of the Government, and the immediate appointment of a Commission of Inquiry, consisting of a Board of Commissioners, whose office it was to visit the districts and to report thereon. The field of inquiry prescribed by the terms of the Commission, comprehended the mines and collieries of the United Kingdom, and all trades and manufactures whatever, in which chil-

dren work together in numbers, not included under the Factories Regulation Act. The mass of evidence sent up to the Central Board from twenty gentlemen, working day and night, in different parts of the country, with the utmost energy and without intermission for many consecutive months, speaks for itself. Fortunately the Commissioners were men of energy practised in business. The chairman, Mr. Thomas Tooke, who had held the same situation in the Factory Commission, possessed the confidence of the commercial and manufacturing portion of the country. Mr. Horner and Mr. Saunders, two of the Factory Inspectors, had already spent many years in pursuing investigations analogous to those which were now to be made; and Dr. Southwood Smith was qualified as a physiologist and physician, to appreciate the influence of early labour on the physical and moral condition of children. But the very extent and completeness of the evidence transmitted to the Central Board, would have caused its failure as an instrument of legislation, but for the manner in which it was decided to deal with it. The subject was divided into two parts, Mines and Manufactures. The mines were subdivided into collieries and metallic mines, and the manufactures into the larger branches of industry, such as metal-wares, earthenware, glass-making, lace-making, hosiery, calico-printing, paper-making, weaving, &c.

Those who have closely examined the two small volumes, into which compass are compressed and admirably arranged the main facts contained in the enormous folios, can alone appreciate the amount of labour involved in this undertaking, and will not fail to recognise in the lucid order and condensed style, the hand of Dr. Southwood Smith, on whom this portion of the labours of the commission principally devolved. He did not shrink from the task, though nearly every minute of the day was absorbed by a fatiguing profession, sustained through the long hours taken from rest and sleep, by the conviction that the usefulness of this work would afford a heart-felt compensation for its labour. The anticipation was fully realized. When the Report on Mines was laid on the table of the House, astonishment and horror were universal. No such outrages on humanity had been discovered since the disclosure of the treatment of Negro slaves. It was truly said that

this report resembled a volume of travels in a remote and barbarous country, so little had been previously known of the state of things it described. Dark passages to seams of coal, scarcely thirty inches in height, not larger than a good-sized drain, through which children of both sexes, and of all ages, from seven years old and upwards, toiled for twelve hours daily, and sometimes more, obliged to crawl on "all fours," dragging after them loaded corves or carts, fastened to their bodies by a belt, a chain passing between the legs;—infants of four, five, and six years old, carried down on their parents' knees to keep the air-doors, sitting in a little niche scooped out in the coal, for twelve hours daily, alone, in total darkness, except when the corves, lighted by their solitary candle, passed along, and some of them during the winter never seeing the light of day, except on Sunday;—girls and women hewing coals like men, and by the side of men;—girls and women clothed in nothing more than loose trowsers, and these often in rags, working side-by-side with men in a state of utter nudity;—girls of tender years carrying on their backs along unrailed roads, often over their ankles, and sometimes up to their knees in water, burdens of coal, weighing from $\frac{3}{4}$ cwt. to 3 cwt., from the bottom of the mine to the bank, up steep ladders, "the height ascended and the distance along the roads added together, exceeding the height of St. Paul's Cathedral;" married women, and women about to become mothers, dragging or bearing on their shoulders similar enormous loads, up to the very moment when forced to leave this "horse-work" to be "drawn up," to give birth to their helpless offspring,—themselves as helpless—at the pit's mouth, and sometimes even in the pit itself;—boys, of seven and eight years old, bound till the age of twenty-one apprentices to the colliers, receiving until that age, as the reward for their labour, nothing but food, clothing, and lodging, working side-by-side with young men of their own age, free labourers, the latter receiving men's wages,—boys employed at the steam-engines for letting down and drawing up the work-people;—ropes employed for this service obviously and acknowledgedly unsafe;—accidents of a fearful nature constantly occurring;—the most ordinary precautions to guard against danger neglected; a collier's chances of immunity from mortal peril being about equal to those of a

soldier on the field of battle—for all this neither the legislature nor the public were at all prepared, nor were they better prepared for the two last conclusions deduced by the Commissioners, as the result of the whole body of evidence, namely :—

“That partly by the severity of the labour and the long hours of work, and partly through the unhealthy state of the place of work, this employment, as at present carried on in all the districts, deteriorates the physical constitution; in the thin-seam mines, more especially, the limbs become crippled, and the body distorted; and in general the muscular powers give way, and the work-people are incapable of following their occupation, at an earlier period of life than is common in other branches of industry. That by the same causes, the seeds of painful and mortal diseases are often sown in childhood and youth; these, slowly but steadily developing themselves, assume a formidable character between the ages of thirty and forty; and each generation of this class of the population is commonly extinct soon after fifty.”

When on the 7th of June, 1842, Lord Ashley moved for leave to bring in a Bill, founded on this Report, there was an unusually large attendance of members. After expressing his warm acknowledgments to the late administration, “not only for the Commission which they gave, but for the Commissioners whom they appointed, gentlemen who had performed the duties assigned them with unrivalled skill, fidelity and zeal,” he proceeded in an elaborate speech, listened to throughout by a silent and deeply attentive House, to detail the most important points of the evidence, presenting such an appalling picture of the physical miseries and the moral deterioration of large classes of the community, that the motion was granted without a dissentient voice. Members on every side vied with each other in cordial assent and sympathy with the measure. The contemporary press echoed the tone; the manner of the speech was deservedly eulogized for its freedom from all sickly sentimentalities, useless recriminations, and philanthropic clap-traps; for the way in which the startling and impressive facts of the case were simply stated and lucidly arranged, and in which each was made to bear upon the nature and necessity of the projected remedy, while blessings were invoked in the name of humanity, on the man by whom this was done, and done so well. “The laurels of party,” it was truly declared, “were worthless, compared with the wreath due to this generous enterprize.”

Lord Ashley's Bill proposed a total exclusion of girls and women from the labour of mines and collieries; a

total prohibition of male children from this labour, no boy being allowed to descend into a mine, for the purpose of performing any kind of work therein, under thirteen years of age ; a total prohibition of apprenticeship to this labour, and a provision that no person, other than a man between twenty one and fifty years of age, shall have charge of the machinery by which the work-people are let down and drawn up the shafts.

The history of the mutilated progress of this Bill through both Houses, has now to be recorded.

The first point was unanimously acceded to in the Commons ; the second was altered by the substitution of the age of ten, for that of thirteen ; the concession, however, being neutralized, as far as practicable, by the provision, that no boy under thirteen should work on any two successive days ; the third was materially altered by the addition of the word "underground," thus allowing the collier to take apprentices provided he worked them on the surface ; the fourth was altered by omitting the limitation to fifty, thus permitting the lives of all who work in mines, to be placed in the hands of aged and decrepid men.

Thus changed, each change, it will be observed, being directly against the interest and safety of the work-people, the Bill passed the Commons. In the House of Lords, the whole measure was met with a spirit of hostility as unexpected as it was unanimous, and alas ! successful. It had been forgotten that the mines and collieries of the kingdom belong, with very few exceptions, to the great landed proprietors—the same noble lords who had now to decide on the fate of the Bill. For some time it was impossible to get any member of that noble House to take any charge of the business. At length, Lord Devon, from a feeling of shame to which so many had showed themselves insensible, volunteered to do what he could to conduct the Bill through its perilous course. In this noble House, even the prohibition to work female children, and married women, and women about to become mothers, was murmured at, but no member ventured to propose an alteration of this part of the measure. The clause prohibiting apprenticeship was expunged, saving that a provision was retained that no apprenticeship should be contracted under ten years of age, nor for a longer period than eight years. The clause limiting the labour

of boys under thirteen to alternate days, was expunged. And the clause regulating the age of the persons that work the machinery for conveying the work-people up and down the shafts, which the Commons had altered on the one hand so as to permit decrepid men to perform this office, the Lords now altered on the other, so as to entrust it to boys.

Early in the following Session, the Commissioners presented their second Report on Trades and Manufactures, drawn up on the same elaborate plan, written with the same clearness and calmness, and exhibiting in some respects a still more melancholy though not so startling a picture of the condition of large classes of our industrial population. It discloses in its full extent the mischief done to the former Bill by the expulsion of the clause prohibiting apprenticeship; for it proves that the oppressions and cruelties perpetrated under this legal sanction in mines and collieries, is even exceeded in some trades and manufactures. The words of the Report relative to this subject, ought to sink deep into the mind and heart of the country. After stating that in some trades, more especially those requiring skilled workmen, apprentices are bound by legal indentures usually at the age of fourteen, and for a term of seven years: the Commissioners continue:

"But by far the greater number are bound without any prescribed legal forms, and in almost all these cases they are required to serve their masters, at whatever age they may commence their apprenticeship, until they attain the age of twenty-one, in some instances in employments in which there is nothing deserving the name of skill to be acquired, and in other instances in employments in which they are taught to make only one particular part of the article manufactured; so that at the end of their servitude they are altogether unable to make any one article of their trade in a complete state. A large proportion of these apprentices consist of orphans, or are the children of widows, or belong to the poorest families, and frequently are apprenticed by Boards of Guardians. The term of servitude of these apprentices may and sometimes does commence as early as seven years of age, and is often passed under circumstances of great hardship and ill-usage, and under the condition that, during the greater part, if not the whole, of their term, they receive nothing for their labour beyond food and clothing. This system of apprenticeship is most prevalent in the district around Wolverhampton, and is most abused by what are called "small masters," persons who are either themselves journeymen, or who, if working on their own account, work with their apprentices. In these districts it is the practice among some of the employers to engage the services of children by a simple written agreement, on the breach of which the defaulter is liable to be committed to jail, and in fact often is so without regard to age."

The Report on Wolverhampton states, that "within the last four years five hundred and eighty-four males, and females, all under age, have been committed to

Stafford jail for breach of contract." The following passage concerning the treatment of the children, completes the picture :

"In the case in which the children are the servants of the workmen, and under their sole control, the master apparently knowing nothing about their treatment, and certainly taking no charge of it, they are almost always roughly, very often harshly, and sometimes cruelly used ; and in the districts around Wolverhampton in particular, the treatment of them is oppressive and brutal to the last degree."

Wolverhampton, it will be remembered, is the centre of the iron manufactures in South Staffordshire, and the words of this Report in their simple conciseness, lay bare a state of things which, that it should exist *at this day*, just as if no Commission had been established, and no facts made known to the public, in the centre of a country which calls itself civilized, is an outrage to humanity. The descriptions of this district exhibit scenes of actual misery among the children, far surpassing the inventions of fiction. Here, in the busy workshops, the Assistant-Commissioner saw the poor apprentice boys at their daily labour ; their anxious faces, looking three times their age, on deformed and stunted bodies, showing no trace of the beauty and gladness of childhood or youth ; their thin hands and long fingers toiling at the vice for twelve, fourteen, sixteen, sometimes more hours out of the twenty-four ; yet with all their toil, clothed in rags, shivering with cold, half-starved or fed on offal, beaten, kicked, abused, struck with locks, bars, hammers, or other heavy tools, burnt with showers of sparks from red-hot irons, pulled by the hair and ears till the blood ran down, and in vain imploring for mercy ;—and all this is going on *now*.*

Why should it go on ? Apprenticeship is not an order of Nature. It is an arrangement, good in itself, made by the law, and the law should therefore regulate it beneficently. The necessity of interfering between parents and children has been admitted, and in some degree acted upon in the factories, mines, and collieries. It is equally necessary in trades and manufactures ; and much more is it necessary to interfere between masters and apprentices. The natural instinct has even still some power. The mothers do carry their over-toiled children to their beds when they are too

* Reports on Wolverhampton, and other districts, on the Employment of Children and Young Persons in the Iron Trades, &c., of South Staffordshire, and the neighbouring parts of Worcestershire and Shropshire.

tired to crawl to them,—but no one cares for the wretched apprentice. He may lie down and die when his “long day’s work” is done, and his master can get another, and a sovereign, besides, at the workhouse.

It is difficult to make an abridgment of the concise and graphic descriptions given in these Reports of the physical and moral condition of the persons employed in the various branches of industry included in the Inquiry; and it is the less necessary, because the means of information are placed within the reach of all; an octavo volume* having been published by direction of the Government, at the desire of the House of Commons, containing verbatim the most important portions of the Reports. The individuals composing these classes are to be numbered not by thousands, but by millions; yet what is the weighed, the solemn verdict given by this Commission as to their moral condition? Every word has been deeply considered—and should so be read. The Commissioners say, in their general conclusion:—

“That the parents, urged by poverty or improvidence, generally seek employment for the children as soon as they can earn the lowest amount of wages; paying but little regard to the probable injury of their children’s health by early labour, and still less regard to the certain injury of their minds by early removal from school, or even by the total neglect of their education; seldom, when questioned, expressing any desire for the regulation of the hours of work, with a view to the protection and welfare of their children, but constantly expressing the greatest apprehension lest any legislative restriction should deprive them of the profits of their children’s labour; the natural parental instinct to provide, during childhood, for the child’s subsistence, being, in great numbers of instances, wholly extinguished, and the order of nature even reversed—the children supporting, instead of being supported by their parents.

“That the means of instruction are so grievously defective that in all the districts great numbers of children are growing up without any religious, moral, or intellectual training; nothing being done to train them to habits of order, sobriety, honesty, and forethought, or even to restrain them from vice and crime.

“That there is not a single district in which the means of instruction are adequate to the wants of the people, while in some it is insufficient for the education of one-third of the population. That as a natural consequence of this neglect, and of the possession of unrestrained liberty at an early age, when few are capable of self-government, great numbers of these children and young persons acquire in childhood and youth habits which utterly destroy their future health, usefulness, and happiness.”

The details forming the basis of these general statements,—which are cold abstractions, necessarily incapable of presenting the living action and passion of the

* “Physical and Moral Condition of the Children and Young Persons employed in Mines and Manufactures. Illustrated by extracts from the Reports of the Commissioners.”—London: Published for her Majesty’s Stationary Office, by J. W. Parker, West Strand. 1843.

countless individuals from whom they are derived,—exhibit a degree of wide-spread ignorance, vice, and suffering, for the disclosure of which the country was wholly unprepared. For this national moral evil there is no remedy but a national education; and the presentation of the Report was followed, on the part of Lord Ashley, by a motion for “A Moral and Religious Education of the Working Classes.” He sustained his motion by a speech, in which, after expressing his heart-felt thanks to the Commissioners for “an exercise of talent and vigour never surpassed by any public servants,” he gave a comprehensive, massive, and most impressive summary of the results of their labours. Few who were in the House on that night will ever forget the effect produced when, urging on his audience to consider the rapid progress of time, and the appalling rapidity with which a child nine years of age, abandoned to himself, and to companions like himself, is added to the ranks of viciousness, misery, and disorder in manhood, he turned from the Speaker, and looking round on those of his own order, exclaimed—“You call these poor people improvident and immoral, and so they are; but that improvidence and immorality are the results of our neglect, and, in some measure, of our example. Declare this night that you will enter on a novel and a better course—that you will seek their temporal through their eternal welfare—and the blessing of God will rest upon your endeavours; and, perhaps, the oldest among you may live to enjoy for himself and for his children the opening day of the immortal, because the moral glories of the British Empire.”

This appeal was met on the part of the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Sir James Graham, by the answer that he had matured a plan which might be regarded as the first effort of Government to introduce a national system of education. There were unquestionably elements of good in the education clauses, particularly as they were altered in the course of debate, and they might have formed the basis of institutions expanding and improving by experience, until they were put in harmony with the feelings, and became adequate to the wants of the people; but, unfortunately, whatever may have been the real intentions of the Minister, the announcement of his plan had

the effect of exciting in a violent degree the sectarian animosities of the people; and after having arrayed from one end of the kingdom to another in desperate conflict Churchman against Dissenter, and Dissenter against Churchman, and different sections of each against all the rest, terminated, not only in the loss of any measure for Education, but in the defeat of the amendment of the Factory Act, to which the Minister had attached his scheme of National Education. Consequently, the evils resulting from ignorance, remain as before. The Factory Act will, however, be amended. Government announced, on the 6th of February, the intention of limiting the labour of children, under thirteen, to six hours daily.

But although the opportunity of making a national provision for education has for the present been lost, yet the exposure of the total inadequacy of existing Institutions for the intellectual and moral training of the people, has not been without a useful result. Within the space of a few months after the publication of the reports of the "Children's Employment Commission," and immediately after the failure of the Government plan of education, the friends of the Established Church raised in voluntary contributions an educational fund amounting to nearly 200,000*l.*; and one denomination of Dissenters (the Independents) at their first meeting, subscribed towards a similar fund upwards of 17,000*l.*, and pledged themselves to use their utmost exertions to increase this sum to 100,000*l.* in the space of five years. The Methodists also have pledged themselves to raise 200,000*l.* in seven years, and found 700 schools; nor is it probable that other bodies of Dissenters will remain inactive; so that the people have already put to shame the "National Grant of 30,000*l.*," the utmost amount ever yet voted by Parliament for the education of the country—a sum scarcely sufficient to defray the expense of one convict ship, or to maintain for a year one single prison!

The two commissions on which Dr. Southwood Smith has been engaged, have unavoidably turned his mind away from the speculative studies which at one period occupied him more exclusively, and have converted him from a thinker into a worker. Circumstances connected with his profession had long forced upon his observation the wretched state of the dwellings of the

poor, and the disease, suffering, and death produced by the noxious exhalations that arise from the unsewered, undrained, and uncleansed localities into which their houses are crowded. "Nature," said he, "with her burning sun, her stilled and pent-up wind, her stagnant and teeming marsh, manufactures plague on a large and fearful scale: poverty in her hut, covered with her rags, surrounded with her filth, striving with all her might to keep out the pure air, and to increase the heat, imitates nature but too successfully; the process and the product are the same, the only difference is in the magnitude of the result." In the year 1837, this result was produced in certain of the metropolitan districts to such an unusual extent as to attract the attention of the Poor Law Commissioners. They requested Drs. Southwood Smith, Arnott, and Kay to investigate the cause. The districts assigned to Dr. Smith were Whitechapel and Bethnal Green, and he adopted the plan of writing a literal description of what he saw in his tour over these unknown regions. Of the many pictures of squalid wretchedness presented, the following may serve as specimens:—

"An open area of about 700 feet in length, and 300 in breadth; 300 feet of which are covered by stagnant water, winter and summer. In the part thus submerged, there is always a quantity of putrefying animal and vegetable matter, the odour of which at the present moment is most offensive. An open filthy ditch encircles this place. Into this ditch all the Nothing can be conceived more disgusting than the appearance; and the odour of the effluvia is at this moment most offensive. Lamb's-fields is the fruitful source of fever to the houses which immediately surround it, and to the small streets which branch off from it. Particular houses were pointed out to me from which entire families have been swept away, and from several of the streets fever is never absent."

Of St. John Street, a close and densely populated place, in which malignant fever has prevailed in almost every house, he says—

"In one room which I examined, eight feet by ten and nine feet high, six people live by day and sleep at night; the closeness and stench are almost intolerable. . . Alfred and Beckwith Rows, consist of small buildings divided into two houses, one back, the other front: each house being divided into two tenements, occupied by different families. These habitations are surrounded by a broad open drain, in a filthy condition. Heaps of filth are accumulated in the spaces meant for gardens in front of the houses. . . . I entered several of the tenements. In one of them, on the ground floor, I found six persons occupying a very small room, two in bed, ill with fever. In the room above this were two more persons in one bed, ill with fever. In this same room a woman was carrying on the process of silk-winding. . . . Campden-gardens, the dwellings are small ground-floor houses: each containing two rooms, the largest about seven feet by nine, the smallest barely large enough to admit a small bed; the height about seven feet; in winter these houses are exceedingly damp; the

windows are very small ; there is no drainage of any kind ; it is close upon a marshy district. Often all the members of a family are attacked by fever, and die one after the other."

These descriptions can only be compared to Howard's account of the "State of Prisons," fifty years ago. The jail fever was then a recognized and prevalent disease ; it is now only a subject of history. So may the typhus fever of London be fifty years hence. It requires only an enlightened legislature to order, and efficient officers to enforce known remedies.

The impression produced by the entire report, portions of which have now been extracted, led to the motion made by the Bishop of London, in the Session of 1839, for an extension of the inquiry into the state of other towns in the United Kingdom. Early in the following Session (1840), Mr. Slaney obtained a Select Committee of the House of Commons for enquiring into the "Health of Towns." Dr. Southwood Smith was the first witness examined before this Committee, who largely quote his "valuable evidence" in their Report, and refer the legislature to the important paper which he furnished to them, entitled "Abstract of a Report on the prevalence of Fever in Twenty Metropolitan Unions during the year 1838," which they reprinted in their Appendix.

The urgency of the case had now attracted the notice of Government, and in particular had impressed the noble Secretary of State for the Home Department, the Marquis of Normanby ; but like many others, being unable to dismiss a doubt whether there were not some exaggerations in these descriptions, he resolved to verify their correctness by a personal inspection of the districts in question. He accordingly accompanied Dr. Southwood Smith in a visit to Whitechapel and Bethnal Green, and was so deeply affected by what he saw, that he declared his instant conviction, that "so far from any exaggeration having crept into the descriptions which had been given, they had not conveyed to his mind an adequate idea of the truth ;" as indeed no words can do. Lord Ashley afterwards performed the same painful round in company with Dr. Smith, and expressed himself in a similar manner.*

* These statements are strictly authentic. They went privately, and unattended, into the most squalid and hideous abodes of filth, and misery, and vice, and might well express themselves strongly in public after what they witnessed.—Ed.

IN the Session of 1841, Lord Normanby introduced into Parliament his Bill for the "Drainage of Buildings," and in his speech on moving the second reading of the Bill on the 12th of February, he acknowledged the services of Dr. Southwood Smith, in the following terms. "I cannot allude to them," he said, "without at once expressing my obligations to that indefatigably benevolent gentleman for much useful information which I have derived from him, with whom I have had the satisfaction of much personal communication on this subject." The principal provisions of this Bill regarded the drainage of houses, the regulation of the width of lanes and alleys, and the form and conveniences of dwellings. The Bishop of London warmly supported the measure:—"As presiding over the spiritual interests of the metropolis, he felt deeply interested in a Bill which he was satisfied would so materially affect them: and being thoroughly convinced that *the physical condition of the poor was intimately connected with their moral and religious state, and that the two exerted a mutual influence upon each other*, he thankfully hailed the present measure as the first step towards an elevation of that class of the community in the scale of social comfort and order." Lord Ellenborough followed in the same spirit:—"It is idle," said he, "to build churches, to erect school-houses, and to employ clergymen and schoolmasters, if we do no more. Our first object should be to improve the physical condition of the poor labourer,—to place him in a position in which he can acquire self-respect; above all things to give him a home."

But before this measure had passed, there was a dissolution of Parliament, and a change in the administration. The present ministers, however, have not neglected a subject in which the former Government took so deep an interest; but have appointed a Commission of Inquiry into the state of large towns and populous districts, with a view, chiefly, to report on remedies. In an extended examination before these Commissioners, Dr. Southwood Smith states that the disease formerly described by him, still continues, and with increasing virulence; that a new epidemic is now ravaging the metropolis, far more extensive and fatal than the preceding; that the poorer classes in their neglected districts, are still exposed to causes of disease, suffer-

ing, and death which are peculiar to them, and the malignant influence of which is steady, unceasing, and sure. His words are too terrible to need any comment;—

"The result," he says, "is the same as if twenty or thirty thousand of these people were annually taken out of their wretched dwellings and put to death, the actual fact being that they are allowed to remain in them and die. I am now speaking of what silently, but surely, takes place every year in the metropolis alone, and do not include in this estimate the numbers that perish from these causes in the other great cities, and in the towns and villages of the kingdom. It has been stated that 'the annual slaughter in England and Wales, from preventible causes, of typhus fever, which attacks persons in the vigour of life, is double the amount of what was suffered by the allied armies in the battle of Waterloo.'—This is no exaggerated statement; this great battle against our people is every year fought and won; and yet few take account of it, partly for the very reason that it takes place every year. However appalling the picture presented to the mind by this statement, it may be justly regarded as a literal expression of the truth. I am myself convinced from what I constantly see of the ravages of this disease, that this mode of putting the result does not give an exaggerated expression of it. Indeed the most appalling expression of it would be the mere cold statement of it in figures."

In conclusion, Dr. Smith enforced in earnest language, the consideration that this whole class of evils is remediable; that it does not belong to that description of evil which is mingled with good in the conditions of our being, but to that much larger sum of suffering which is the consequence of our own ignorance and apathy;—

"No Government," said he, "can prevent the existence of poverty; no benevolence can reach the evils of extreme poverty under the circumstances which at present universally accompany it; but there is ground of hope and encouragement in the thought that the most painful and debasing of those circumstances are adventitious, and form no necessary and inevitable part of the condition of that large class of every community which must earn their daily bread by their manual labour. These adventitious circumstances constitute the hardest part of the lot of the poor, and these, as I have just said, are capable of being prevented to a very large extent. The labours of a single individual, I mean those of the illustrious Howard, have at length succeeded in removing exactly similar evils, though somewhat more concentrated and intense, from our prisons; they are at least equally capable of being removed from the dwelling-houses and work-places of the people. Here there is a field of beneficent labour which falls legitimately within the scope of the legislator, and which is equally within that of the philanthropist, affording a common ground, beyond the arena of party strife, in the culture of which all parties may unite with the absolute certainty that they cannot thus labour without producing some good result, and that the good produced, whatever may be its amount, must be unmixed good."

Dr. Smith is now engaged with Lord Ashley and other influential and benevolent men, in the formation of an Association for improving the dwellings of the industrious classes, by the erection of comfortable, cleanly, well-drained and ventilated houses, to be let to families in sets of rooms, with an ample supply of

water on each floor; a fair return for the capital invested being secured. Eleemosynary relief forms no part of the undertaking, as tending to destroy the independence of those whom it is designed to benefit. The association has fully matured its plans, and will endeavour practically to show by model-houses what may be done by combination to lessen the expensiveness of the dwellings of the poor, and to increase their healthfulness and comforts.

Though the sanatory condition of the working classes has been the especial object of Dr. Southwood Smith of late years, he has not forgotten the wants of the middle classes in the season of sickness. These are not at first sight so obvious; but there are circumstances which have never been sufficiently considered, that place many, whose station in life removes them above the evils of poverty, in a worse condition when overtaken by disease than the poor who can obtain admission into the hospitals. Numbers of the middle classes annually leave their homes and families and flock to London, as to a common centre, to find employment, or to complete their education. Others resort to it from distant parts of the country for medical or surgical advice. Strangers and foreigners constantly visit it. When attacked by disease,—a close and comfortless lodging in a noisy street, with no better attendance than the already over-tasked servant of all work, or a landlady, who begins to dread infection, or the non-payment of her rent,—is the lot of many a delicately minded and sensitive person in the pain of fever or inflammation, with all the desolation of the feeling of absence from home and friends.

Out of a sympathy with such sufferers, arose in Dr. Smith's mind the idea of founding an institution on the principles of the great clubs, arranged with every requisite for a place of abode in sickness, and provided with regular medical officers and nurses; the principle of admission being, as in the case of the clubs, a certain yearly subscription, and a fixed weekly payment during residence in it. Such institutions are not uncommon on the continent, though, until the present time, none have existed in this country. That originated by Dr. Southwood Smith, under the name of the "Sanatorium," was opened in March, 1842, at Devonshire-place House, in the New Road. The house is

well calculated for an experimental attempt, but is not sufficiently large to carry out the purposes which he contemplated. These would extend to suites of rooms, kept at a regular temperature for consumptive cases, and to a separate building for fever cases, which are now totally excluded. It appears only to want greater publicity to attain its full scope of usefulness; but unless supported by the class for whom it is designed it cannot be maintained at all. That such a club is certain to be well supported at some period not far distant, we can plainly see; but the attempt may be premature. Its founder—deriving no personal advantage from the design, but devoting much time and labour to its advancement—has rested its claim to public support simply on the ground, that, as when the middle and higher classes combine to found public schools and colleges, and to build and endow churches, they solicit the contributions of the rich and benevolent because no new thing, however excellent in itself, or however affluent in the means of securing its ultimate independence and prosperity, can be set on foot without some capital; so this institution appeals to the public for assistance, to enable it to mitigate suffering, to shorten the duration of disease, and to save life. The Bank of England, and the large and influential merchants houses have seen the good of the undertaking, and have contributed largely to promote it; nor should we omit to notice in particular the strenuous exertions of Mr. Thomas Chapman, the Chairman of the Sanatorium Committee.

Amidst his many arduous and apparently endless labours, some words of encouragement should be addressed to Dr. Southwood Smith, who in his private station devotes himself to the diffusion of philosophical truth, and to the instruction of the people in some of the most practically interesting and least understood parts of knowledge. He has described for them, the wonderful structures that form the outward and visible machinery of life, and the still more wonderful results of its action—the processes that constitute the vital functions. He has shown the brighter portion of the height and depth of our human nature in the Sources of Happiness, and has proved that “in the entire range of the sentient creation, without a single exception, the higher the organized structure, the greater the enjoyment to which

it ministers and in which it terminates." He has so expounded the philosophy of Pain, as to communicate to the mourning and desponding, heart and hope, and has taught in the noblest sense the uses of adversity. He has still to deduce from the action of physical agents on living structures the laws of health, and to expound the intellectual and moral constitution based on the physical and growing out of it; without a knowledge of which, neither the mother nor the educator can avoid the most pernicious errors, nor ultimately reach their goal. There are minds and hearts that thank him for what he has already accomplished, and that anxiously await the completion of his work.

By his public labours Dr. Smith has awakened the attention of the people at large, and of the legislature, to those physical causes of suffering, disease, and premature death, which, while they afflict the whole community, press with peculiar severity on the poorer classes; and has shown not only that these causes are removable, but the means by which human wisdom and energy may certainly succeed in removing them. And he is peculiarly fitted to render services to the community on this important subject, in consequence of his intimate acquaintance with that dreadful train of diseases which are entailed on humanity by our inattention to removing the causes of the febrile poison.

Lord Ashley is yet young, and few men have before them a more noble, or more successful career. He has proved that he possesses the qualities requisite for the performance of the mission to which he has felt the vocation. He is not only intellectual, but possessed of the greatest industry, perseverance, and confidence in his cause, yet diffident of himself from the very depth of his feeling concerning it; not wanting in firmness, yet candid and conciliating, and though earnest even to enthusiasm, tempering and directing the impulses of zeal by a sober and sound judgment. His singleness of purpose, his unquestioned sincerity and honesty, his diligence in collecting facts, his careful sifting, lucid arrangement, and concise and candid exposition of them, and his plain unaffected language and unpretending address, have secured him the deeply respectful attention even of the House of Commons. Sustained in his appeals to that difficult assembly by the profound consciousness that the cause he advocates

must engage on its side the sympathies of our common humanity, on which he throws himself with a generous confidence, he often produces the highest results of eloquence. He has already calmed the fears of the capitalists; conciliated the Government; engaged the co-operation of the Legislature; placed under the protection of the Law the children of the factories; placed under the protection of the Law the still more helpless children doomed to the mines and collieries; and to the female children and women, heretofore confined therein, he has said—"You are free, and shall do the work of beasts in the attitude of beasts, no more." Lord Ashley has still to emancipate apprentices; to obtain a general registration of accidents; to improve the localities and dwellings of the poor; and to give the compensating benefit of education to those whose early years are spent in labour. Because the first attempts to accomplish these great objects have failed, let no evasions, obstacles, delays, discourage him, nor let him—

"Bate a jot,—

Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward."

THOMAS INGOLDSBY.

"POISON IN JEST."

At the conclusion of the majority of the "Ingoldsby Legends," there are verses entitled "Moral;" and this may have been considered by some as a very advantageous addition to productions which have had so extensive a sale, and consequently so extensive an influence upon the minds of particular classes of readers. At the end of the "Legend of a Shirt" there occurs the following,—

MORAL.

"And now for some practical hints from the story
Of Aunt Fan's mishap, which I've thus laid before ye;
For, if *rather too gay*
I can venture to say
A fine vein of morality is, in each lay
Of my primitive Muse the distinguishing trait!"—2nd Series.

Now, either this is meant to be the fact; or it is not. If meant as a fact, it will be the business of this paper to display what sort of morality these popular legends contain. But it is not seriously meant!—the author is "only in fun!" Very well; then the sort of fun in which he abounds shall be displayed, together with the "fine vein of morality" which it is to be presumed his Muse does *not* contemplate.

The story of "Nell Cook," (second series) is very clearly and graphically told in rhyme. Nelly is the cook-maid of a portly Canon, a learned man with "a merry eye." Nelly, besides being an excellent cook, is *also* a very comely lass, and the two-fold position she holds in the private establishment of the Canon is sufficiently apparent. In this merry condition of gastronomical affairs there arrives "a lady gay" in a coach and four, whom the Canon presses to his breast as his Niece, gives her his blessing, and kisses her ruby lip. Nelly, the mistress cook, looks askew at this, suspecting they were "a little less than 'kin, and rather more than kind." The gay Lady remains feasting with the Canon in his house, quaffing wine, and singing *Bobbing*

Joan! The cook becomes jealous of the clergyman, hates the assumed Niece, and hits upon a plan for discovering the real truth of the relationship. She hides the poker and tongs in the Lady's bed! The said utensils remain there unheeded during six weeks—and the primitive Muse with “a fine vein of morality” says she does not know where the Lady took her rest all that time! To be brief: Nelly puts poison into her cookery—the bell rings for prayers—the Canon does not come—cannot be found. They search, however, and eventually breaking open the door of a bed-chamber, they find the Canon lying dead upon the bed, and his “Niece” upon the floor, dead also. The black, swollen, livid forms, are described; and the Prior then says “Well! here's a pretty Go!” When the assumed relationship of the parties is mentioned in the “sacred fane,” the Sacristan “puts his thumb unto his nose, and spreads his fingers out!” It may now be fairly assumed—with submission—that the Ingoldsby Muse is not serious, but only in fun—in fact that she *is* “rather too gay.” To proceed, therefore, with the sequel of this extremely droll story.

The monks, or somebody employed by them, as it seems, seize upon Nelly, and taking up a heavy paving stone near the Canon's door, bury her alive under it. And,—

“I've been told, that moan and groan, and fearful wail and shriek
Came from beneath that paving stone for nearly half a week—
For three long days, and three long nights, came forth those sounds of fear;
Then all was o'er—they never more fell on the listening year!”

Excellent fun!—buried alive!—moans and shrieks for three days and nights!—really this fine vein of morality will be the death of us!

But these things are not meant to be pleasant. This is meant to be serious. It certainly looks very like that.

In process of years three masons take up the heavy stone, and underneath it, in a sort of dry well, they discover a fleshless skeleton. This also looks very serious. But presently we shall find that horror and levity are exquisitely blended—the “smiles and the tears,” as it is beautifully said by some admirers, in extenuation. For “near this fleshless skeleton” there lies a small pitcher, and a “mouldy piece of *kissing-crust*!”

Here it may truly be said that Life and Death meet in horrible consummation. It is awfully funny indeed!

Under the head of "Moral," at the end, all morality is evaded by silly common-place exhortations, intended to pass for humour,—such as cautioning "learned Clerks" not to "keep a pretty serving-maid;" and "don't let your Niece sing *Bobbing Joan*," and "don't eat too much pie!"—poisoned pie.

Here is another of these fine veins of a Muse who "poisons in jest." A learned Clerk—the clergy are 'specially favoured with prominently licentious positions in these horrible pleasantries—a learned Clerk comes to visit the wife of Gengulphus in his absence.* They eat, and drink, hold revels; the "spruce young Clerk" finds himself very much at home with "that frolicksome lady:" and then—having placed every thing quite beyond doubt,—the primitive Muse leaves a blank with asterisks, as if she were too delicate to say more. During one of their festivities the husband, Gengulphus, returns from a pilgrimage. The learned Clerk, the spruce young divine, is concealed by the wife in a closet, and she then bestows all manner of fond attentions upon her weary husband, whose "weakened body" is soon overcome by some strong drink, and he falls into a sound sleep. The young divine then comes out of the closet, and assists the wife in murdering Gengulphus, by smothering and suffocation, all of which is related with the utmost levity. After this, they deliberately cut up the corpse.

"So the Clerk and the Wife, they each took a knife,
And the nippers that nipped the loaf-sugar for tea;
With the edges and points they severed the joints
At the clavicle, elbow, hip, ankle, and knee."

Having dismembered him "limb from limb," cutting off his hands at the wrists, by means of the great sugar-nippers, they determine upon throwing his head down the well. Before doing this, however, they cut off his long beard, and stuff it into the cushion of an arm-chair, all of which is laughably told. Then, the Muse does not mean to be serious?—this is not intended as an account of a murder done, or anything beyond a joke. Read the next stanza.

"They contrived to pack the trunk in a sack,
Which they hid in an osier bed outside the town,
The Clerk bearing arms, legs, and all on his back,
As the late Mr. Greenacre served Mrs. Brown."

Exactly—this is the point at issue—here is the direct

* See "Gengulphus," 1st Series.

clearly-pronounced comparison with an actual horror made palpable beyond all dispute. As did Greenacre, in like manner did this spruce young Clerk! No pantomime murders, no Christmas gambol burlesques—but the real thing is meant to be represented to the imagination. Here is, indeed a specimen of a Muse being “rather too gay,” and upon a very unusual occasion for merriment. Subsequently the story becomes preternatural, after the manner of a monkish legend, variegated with modern vulgarisms, and finally the wife seats herself upon the cushion which contains her murdered husband’s beard, and the cushion sticks to her——! What follows cannot be ventured in prose. The “Moral” at the end, is not very symphonious; but in the usual twaddling style, affecting to be humorous—“married pilgrims don’t stay away so long,” and “when you *are* coming home, just write and say so;” learned Clerks “stick to your books”—“don’t visit a house when the master’s from home”—“shun drinking;” and “gay ladies allow not your *patience* to fail.” A fair average specimen of the beautiful concentrated essence of that “fine vein of morality” which runs, or rather, gutters, through these legends.

In the Legend of Palestine (second series) which is called “The Ingoldsby Penance” (?) the knight, who has gone to the holy wars, leaving his wife at Ingoldsby Hall, intercepts a letter, carried by a little page, from his wife to a paramour with whom she has “perhaps been a little too gay,” as the holy Father remarks—whereby we discover what meaning is attached to those words. Sir Ingoldsby gives the little page a kick, which sends him somewhere, and the child is apparently killed on the spot. The paramour turns out to be the revered Prior of Abingdon! Sir Ingoldsby forthwith cuts off the reverend man’s head. His account of the style in which he murdered his wife, the lady Alice, must be told in his own words:—

“And away to Ingoldsby Hall I flew!
 Dame Alice I found—
 She sank on the ground—
 I twisted her neck till I twisted it round!
With jibe, and jeer, and mock, and scoff,
 I twisted it on—till I twisted it off!”

Serious or comic? Surely this cannot be meant as a laughable thing, but as a dreadful actual revenge! At

any rate, however, it is laughed at, and the very next couplet institutes a paraphrastic comparison with Humpty Dumpty who sat on a wall? "All the king's doctors, and all the king's men," sings the primitive Muse—who is sometimes "rather too gay"—"can't put fair Alice's head on *agen*!" It must by this time have become perfectly apparent that the only possible attempt at justification of such writings must be on the score of some assumed merit in the unexampled mixture of the ludicrous and the revolting—the "exquisite turns"—"the playfulness" of these bloody fingers.

The legitimate aim of Art is to produce a pleasurable emotion; and through this medium, in its higher walks, to refine and elevate humanity. The art which has a mere temporary excitement and gratification of the external senses as its sole object, however innocent the means it employs, is of the lowest kind, except one. That one is the excitement of vicious emotions, unredeemed by any sincere passion or purpose, whether justified or self-deluding; and there are no emotions so vicious and so injurious as those which tend to bring the most serious feelings and conditions of human nature into ridicule and contempt; to turn the very body of humanity, "so fearfully and wonderfully made," inside out, by way of a jest, and to represent "battle, murder, and sudden death," not as dreadful things from which we would pray that all mankind might be "delivered," but as the richest sources of drollery and amusement.

There is perhaps no instance of extensive popularity without ability of some kind or other, even when the popularity is of the most temporary description: and that the "Ingoldsby Legends" possess very great talent, of its kind, should never be denied. It will be treated in due course. Their merit is certainly not *wit*, in its usual acceptation; and their humour can scarcely be regarded as legitimate, being continually founded upon trifling with sacred, serious, hideous, or otherwise forbidden subjects, beyond the natural region of the comic muse, and often beyond nature herself.

It will be acknowledged on all sides that the cheapest kind of wit, or humour, or whatever passes current for either, is that which a man finds ready-made. Whoever is the first to appreciate and display a certain quantity of this, in a new, and attractive, or striking shape, is pretty sure of finding a large audience. To appeal

to established jokes, and slang sayings, and absurd events and characters, all well known to everybody, is one means of amusing a large and by no means very select class : ghost stories and tales of preternatural wonder, if at all well told, are also sure of exciting a considerable interest, so long as the imagination retains its influence as a powerful faculty of the human mind ; and, though, last, it is to be feared not least, there is a very large class extremely disposed to be pleased with a clever dalliance amidst unseemly subjects and stories—a liquorish temerity which continually approaches the very verge of verbal grossness, and escapes under the insinuation—in fact, an ingenious “wrapping up” of all manner of unsightly, unsavoury, and unmentionable things.

The quantity of common-place slang in these Legends is a remarkable feature. Very much of it is of a kind that was in vogue in the time of our fathers and grand-fathers, such as “Hookey Walker—apple-pie order—a brace of shakes—cock-sure—meat for his master—raising the wind—smelling a rat—up to snuff—going snacks—little Jack Horner,” &c. ; and there is no want of the slang of present days, such as—“done brown—a shocking bad hat—like bricks—coming it strong—heavy wet—a regular guy—right as a trivet—a regular turn up—tipping a facer—cobbing and fibbing—tapping the claret—a prime set to !” &c. These choice morsels are all introduced between inverted commas to mark them as quotations ; as if this rendered them a jot the more fit to illustrate murderous tales ; or as if their dull vulgarity was excusable because it was not original. To use slang with impunity requires great tact, and good taste, and invention, and the finest humour ;—inverted commas do nothing.

Many of the tales end with some very fusty old sayings, presented to the eye all in capital letters :—“DON’T HALLO BEFORE YOU’RE QUITE OUT OF THE WOOD ; NEVER BORROW A HORSE YOU DON’T KNOW OF A FRIEND ; LOOK AT THE CLOCK ; WHO SUPS WITH THE DEVIL SHOULD HAVE A LONG SPOON,” &c., each of which is intended as a rare piece of humour to wind up with. The stanzas also display in capital letters such excellent new wit as—“KEEP YOUR HANDKERCHIEF SAFE IN YOUR POCKET ; LITTLE PITCHERS HAVE LONG EARS ; BEWARE OF THE RHINE, AND TAKE CARE OF THE RHINO ; I WISH YOU MAY GET IT ; YOU

CAN'T MAKE A SILK PURSE OF A SOW'S EAR ; A BIRD IN THE HAND IS WORTH TWO IN THE BUSH !" &c. As for the distiches and stanzas at the end of most of the legends under the old-fashioned head "moral," they are all written upon the same principle of arrant twaddling advice, the self-evident pointlessness of which is intended to look like humour, and are humiliating to common sense.

Amidst all these heavy denunciations it is "quite a relief" to be able to admire something. In freedom and melody of comic versification, and in the originality of compound rhymes, the "Ingoldsby Legends" surpass everything of the kind that has appeared since the days of Hudibras and of Peter Pindar. The style is occasionally an indifferent imitation of the old English ballads ; but this method of compound rhyming is of a kind which may be regarded, if not as the discovery of new powers in the English language, at least as an enlargement of the domain of those powers. The legends contain in almost every page the best possible illustration of the true principle of rhyming, which the best poets, and the public, have always felt to depend solely upon a good ear, and (more especially in the *English* language) to have nothing whatever to do with the eye and the similarity of letters—an absurd notion which the majority of critics, to this very day, entertain, and display. These legends are, in this respect, philological studies, indisputable theoretically, and as novel as they are amusing in practice. The most incongruous and hitherto unimaginable combinations become thoroughly malleable in the Ingoldsby hand, and words of the most dissimilar letters constitute *perfect rhymes*, single, double, and triple. Moreover, these instances are not a few ; they are abundant, and almost in every page.

"His features, and phiz awry
Show'd so much misery,
And so like a dragon he
Look'd in his agony," &c.

INGOLDSBY *Legends, 2nd Series.*

"A nice little boy held a golden ewer,
Emboss'd and fill'd with water as pure
As any that flows between Rheims and Namur."—*1st. Series.*

"Extremely annoyed by the 'tarnation *whop*,' as it
's call'd in Kentuck, on his head and its *opposite*,
Blogg show'd fight
When he saw, by the light
Of the flickering candle, that had not yet quite
Burnt down in the socket, though not over bright,

Certain dark-colour'd stains, as of blood newly spilt,
Revealed by the dog's having scratch'd off the quilt,
Which hinted a story of horror and guilt!

"'Twas 'no mistake'—

He was 'wide awake'

In an instant: for, when only decently drunk,
Nothing sobers a man so completely as '*funck*.'"—*Ibid.*

"From his finger he draws

His costly turquoise;

And, not thinking at all about little Jackdaws," &c.—*Ibid.*

"Both Knights of the Golden Fleece, high-born Hidalgos,
With whom e'en the King himself quite as a 'pal' goes."

2nd Series.

"Or if ever you've witness'd the face of a sailor
Return'd from a voyage, and escaped from a gale, or
Poeticè 'Boreas' that 'blustering railer,'

To find that his wife, when he hastens to hail her

Has just run away with his cash—and a tailor," &c.—*Ibid*

All these rhymes are perfect rhymes to the ear, which is the only true judge. Let critics of bad ear, or no-ear, beware how they commit themselves in future by attempting to make correct rhyming a matter of *literary* eye-sight. These examples bring the question to a test more finally than any argument or disquisition could do.

"The Most Reverend Don Garcilasso Quevedo

Was just at this *time, as he*

Now held the *Primacy*," &c.—*Ibid.*

"A long yellow pin-a-fore

Hangs down, each chin afore," &c.—*Ibid.*

Which it seems of a sort is

To puzzle our Cortes,

And since it has quite flabbergasted this Diet, I

Look to your Grace with no little anxiety, &c.

* * * *

So put your considering cap on—we're curious

To learn your receipt for a Prince of Asturias.

* * * *

So distinguish'd a Pilgrim—especially when he

Considers the boon will not cost him one penny.

* * * *

Since your Majesty don't like the pease in the *shoe*, or to
Travel—what say you to burning a *Jew or two*?

Of all cookeries, most

The Saints love a roast!

And a Jew's, of all others, the best dish to toast, &c.—*Ibid*

The rest of the rascals jump'd on him, and *Burk'd him*,

The poor little Page, too, himself got no quarter, but

Was serv'd the same way,

And was found the next day

With his heels in the air, and *his head* in the water-butt

1st Series.

There is a class of people, who, endeavouring to re-

duce poetry to the strict laws of the understanding, defeat themselves of every chance of being permitted to understand poetry: there is, however, a much larger class, who, in reading verse of any kind, abandon all use whatever of the understanding. The specimens of these admirable and masterly rhymes must not render us insensible to the hideous levity of the pictures they continually present to the imagination. Thrown off our guard by the comicalities of the style, such things may be passed over with a laugh the first time (they have been so, too generally); but a second look produces a shudder, recollecting, as we do, the previous allusion to Greenacre, and knowing that these horrors are not meant for pantomime.

In making some remarks on "the diseased appetite for horrors," Mr. Fonblanque has this passage—

"The landlord upon whose premises a murder is committed, is now-a-days a made man. The place becomes a show in the neighbourhood as the scene of a fair. The barn in which Maria Martin was murdered by Corder, was sold in tooth-picks; the hedge through which the body of Mr. Weare was dragged, was purchased by the inch; Bishop's house bids fair to go off in tobacco-stoppers and snuff-boxes, and the well will be drained at a guinea a quart. Really, if people indulge in this vile and horrid taste, they will tempt landlords to get murders committed in their houses, for the great profit accruing from the morbid curiosity."*

Observe the different use made of wit in the foregoing extract, where ridicule and laughter are applied to a moral purpose, *viz.*, to the diseased appetites for horrors—not to the horrors themselves, which were never, in the history of literature, systematically *ripped up* for merriment, till the appearance of these Legends of sanguinary Broad Grins.

The present age is sufficiently rich in its comic poets. They are nearly all remarkable for the *gusto* of their pleasantry, and in the singular fact that they have but little resemblance to each other. George Colman was an original; Thomas Moore was an original; the same may be said of Horace and James Smith; of Theodore Hook; of Hood,† and Laman Blanchard and Titmarsh; of several of the wits of *Blackwood*, and more especially of *Fraser*. And here, in the latter, a totally new spe-

* "England under Seven Administrations," by Albany Fonblanque. Vol. ii.

† It was intended to place the name of "Thomas Hood" in conjunction with that of "Thomas Ingoldsby" at the head of this paper; but the idea was abandoned out of respect to Mr. Hood, the moment the present writer had, for the first time, read these astounding "Legends!"

cies of comic writing should be noticed, *viz.*, that of the classical burlesque, in which "Father Prout," and the late Dr. Maginn, have displayed a mastery over the Greek and Latin versification that was previously unknown in literature, and certainly never suspected as possible. It was as if the dead languages were suddenly called to a state of preternatural life and activity, in which their old friends scarcely could believe their eyes, and the resuscitated Tongues themselves appeared equally astonished at their own identity. All these writers are in various ways full of the soul of humour, wit, or merriment; but *not one of them* ever dreams of making a plaything of the last struggles of humanity, or the "raw heads" of the charnel house. The same natural bounds are also equally observed by all the comic prose writers, numerous as they are. The "Ingoldsby Legends" stand quite alone—and they always will stand quite alone,—for the "joke" will never be repeated.

They are constructed upon a very curious and outrageous principle. As everybody finds his self-love and sense of the ridiculous in a high state of enjoyment at a "damned tragedy" by reason of the incongruity of the actual emotions compared with those which the subject was naturally intended to convey, and the luckless poet had built all his hopes upon conveying—the author of these Legends has hit upon a plan for turning this not very amiable fact to account, by the production of a series of self-damned tragedies. Or, perhaps, they may be more properly termed most sanguinary melo-dramas, intermixed with broad farce over the knife and bowl. The justly reprehensible novel of "Jack Sheppard" had nothing in it of this kind; its brutalities were at least left to produce their natural revulsion; the heroes did not gambol and slide in crimson horror, and paint their felon faces with it to "grin through collars."

The prose tales of these volumes all harp, more or less, upon the same inhuman strings. Some of them, like the "Spectre of Tappington," are simply indelicate, but others are revolting. The death-bed (the reader is made fully to believe it is a death-bed) of the lady Rohesia, is of the latter kind. Her husband, and her waiting maid, though fully believing her to be just at the last gasp, carry on a direct amour seated on the

edge of a death-bed; and a "climax" is only prevented by the bursting of the dying lady's quincey! The "Singular Passage in the life of the late Henry Harris, *Doctor in Divinity*, as related by the Reverend Jasper Ingoldsby, M.A., his friend and Executor" has suggestions of still worse things. Though tedious in commencing, it is a well told, exciting tale of supernatural events. The chief event shall be quoted. A young girl is betrothed to a young man, who bids her farewell for a time, and practices the black art upon her while absent, so that she is sometimes "spirited away" from her home into his chamber by night, there to be subject to all kinds of unmentionable outrages. He moreover has a friend to assist in his orgie! The girl thus alludes to it:—

"How shall I proceed—but no, it is impossible,—not even to you, sir, can I—dare I—recount the proceedings of that unhallowed night of horror and shame. Were my life extended to a term commensurate with that of the Patriarchs of old, never could its detestable, its damning pollutions be effaced from my remembrance; and oh! above all, never could I forget the diabolical glee which sparkled in the eyes of my fiendish tormentors, as they witnessed the *worse* than useless struggles of their miserable victim. Oh! why was it not permitted me to take refuge in unconsciousness—nay, in death itself, from the abominations of which I was compelled to be, not only a witness, but a partaker?" &c.—*Ingoldsby Legends*, 1st Series.

The introduction of a second young man, by way of complicating this preternatural sensualism and horror, admits of no comment. No merriment and burlesque is introduced here. For once a revolting scene and its suggestions, are allowed to retain their true colours. The master-secret of a life froths up from the depths, and the Tale closes as such things mostly do—with a death that looks like annihilation.

Refinement is an essential property of the Ideal, and whatever is touched by ideality is so far redeemed from earth. But where there is *no* touch of it, all is of the earth earthy. In this condition stands the Genius of the Ingoldsby Legends, eye-deep in its own dark slough. Everything falls into it which approaches, or is drawn near. Of all pure things, Fairy Tales are among the most pure and innocent; their ideality can pass safe and unsullied through all visible forms. But if amidst their revels and thin-robed dancings in the moonlight and over the moss, a sudden allusion be made which *reduces* them to earth—a mortal fact suddenly brought home, like that which says "Look! this is a woman;—Miss Jones of the Olympic!" then does the ideal vanish

away with fairy-land, add leave us with a minor theatre in its worst moments, and with such a tale as "Sir Rupert the Fearless," which is written upon the principle of one of those Olympic doggrel burlesques, the desecration of poetry in sense as in feeling. Their tendency is to encourage the public not to believe in true poetry or innocence on the stage, but to be always ready to laugh or think ill things.

Having previously made an allusion to the laughable circumstance of some Jews being burnt alive, the legend which describes it may form an appropriate conclusion to this exposition. It is entitled "The Auto-da-Fe." This is the story. King Ferdinand had been married six years, and his consort not having presented him with "an Infant of Spain," he consults some of his grandees as to what he shall do for "an heir to the throne?" All this part is admirably worked up. The grandees evade reply, and "the *Most Reverend* Don Garcilasso Quevedo," Archbishop of Tolodo, is then consulted, and finally proposes an Auto-da-fé, at which they would burn, roast, and toast some Jews. A passage to this effect was quoted a few pages back. How this was at all likely to occasion her Majesty to present Spain with an heir, every reader, not in the secret, must be quite at a loss to guess. The Auto-da-fé, however, takes place, and by way of proving that it really is one, and not a pantomimic burlesque, the author introduces it by a few serious remarks on the "shrieks of pain and wild affright," and the "soul-wrung groans of deep despair, and blood, and death." In the very next stanza, he has some fun about "the smell of old clothes," and of the Jews roasting; and in speaking of "the groans of the dying," he says they were "all hissing, and spitting, and boiling, and frying," &c. The allusion also to the very delicate story of making "pretty pork," at such a moment, finishes this monomania of misplaced levity—"the *bonne bouche*!" as he calls it, of the Auto-da-fé! But now for the heir to the throne—the Infant of Spain, which all this horror was to influence the Queen in producing to the world! Her Majesty was absent from the atrocities so merrily described; she had "locked herself up" in her Oriel—but not alone. A male devotee was with her to assist in "Pater, and Ave, and Credo," the *double-entendre* character of which is made very apparent, so that her

Majesty does, in due course, bless the nation with an heir to the throne. And who does the astonished reader, who may not happen to be familiar with these very popular Legends, suppose it was that her Majesty had "locked herself up with?" Why the Archbishop of Toledo! Yes, the most reverend Garcilasso!—and so far from the slightest doubt being left on the matter, the author says it is not clear to him but that all Spain would have thought very meanly of "the pious pair" had it been otherwise! The "Moral" at the end, is as usual. In fact, rather worse. It tells you, "when you're in Rome, to do as Rome does!" and "in Spain you must do as they do"—"don't be nice!" &c., &c.

Throughout the whole of the foregoing remarks, it should be observed that no animadversions have been made on religious grounds, nor on the score of conventional morality, nor on matters relating to social intercourse; nor have any personalities escaped from the pen. All that has been said—and there was much to say—is upon the abstract grounds of Literature and Art; with a view to the exposition and denunciation of a false principle of composition, as exemplified in licentious works, which are unredeemed and unextenuated by any one sincere passion, and are consequently among the very worst kind of influences that could be exercised upon a rising generation. The present age is bad enough without such assistance. Wherefore an iron hand is now laid upon the shoulder of Thomas Ingoldsby, and a voice murmurs in his ear, "Brother!—no more of this!"

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

"Thy worth and skill exempts thee from the throng."—MILTON.

Let his page
Which charms the chosen Spirits of the Age,
Fold itself up for a serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompense
In that just expectation."—SHELLEY.

WALTER LANDOR, when a Rugby boy, was famous, among other feats of strength and skill, for the wonderful precision with which he used a cast net; and he was not often disposed to ask permission of the owners of those ponds or streams that suited his morning's fancy. One day a farmer suddenly came down upon him; and ordered him to desist, and give up his net. Whereupon Landor instantly cast his net over the farmer's head; caught him; entangled him; overthrew him; and when he was exhausted, addressed the enraged and discomfited face beneath the meshes, till the farmer promised to behave discreetly. The pride that resented a show of intimidation, the prudence that instantly foresaw the only means of superseding punishment, and the promptitude of will and action, are sufficiently conspicuous. The wilful energy and self-dependent force of character displayed by Walter Landor as a boy, and accompanied by physical power and activity, all of which were continued through manhood, and probably have been so, to a great extent, even up to the present time, have exerted an influence upon his genius of a very peculiar kind:—a genius healthy, but the healthfulness not always well applied—resolute, in a lion-like sense, but not intellectually concentrated and continuous; and seeming to be capable of mastering all things except its own wilful impulses.

Mr. Landor is a man of genius and learning, who stands in a position unlike that of any other eminent individual of his time. He has received no apparent influence from any one of his contemporaries; nor have they or the public received any apparent influence from him. The absence of any fixed and definite influence

upon the public is actually as it seems; but that he has exercised a considerable influence upon the minds of many of his contemporaries is inevitable, because so fine a spirit could never have passed through any competent medium without communicating its electric forces, although from the fineness of its elements, the effect, like the cause, has been of too subtle a nature to leave a tangible or visible impress.

To all these causes combined is attributable the singular fact, that although Walter Savage Landor has been before the public as an author during the last fifty years, his genius seldom denied, but long since generally recognized, and his present position admissibly in that of the highest rank of authors—and no man higher—there has never been any philosophical and critical estimate of his powers. Admired he has often been abundantly, but the admiration has only been supported by “extract,” or by an offhand opinion. The present paper does not pretend to supply this great deficiency in our literature; it will attempt to do no more than “open up” the discussion.

Walter Landor, when at Rugby school, was a leader in all things, yet who did not associate with his school-fellows—the infallible sign of a strong and original character and course through life. He was conspicuous there for his resistance to every species of tyranny, either of the masters and their rules, or the boys and their system of making fags, which things he resolutely opposed “against all odds:” and he was, at the same time, considered arrogant and overbearing in his own conduct. He was almost equally famous for riding out of bounds, boxing, leaping, net-casting, stone-throwing, and for making Greek and Latin verses. Many of these verses were repeated at Rugby forty years after he had left the school. The “master,” however, studiously slighted him so long, that when at last the token was given of approbation of certain Latin verses, the indignant young classic being obliged to copy them out fairly in the “play-book,” added a few more, commencing with,—

*Hæc sunt malorum pessima carminum
Quot Landor unquam scripsit; at accipe
Quæ Tarquini servas cloacam,
Unde tuum, dea flava nomen,” &c.*

From Rugby to Trinity College, Oxford, was the next remove of Walter Landor. He was “rusticated”

for firing off a gun in the quadrangle ; but as he never intended to take a degree, he did not return. He left Oxford—let all the juvenile critics who have taken up facile pens of judgment about Mr. Landor during the last ten years, tremble as they read, and “doubt their own abilities”—in the summer of 1793, when he put forth a small volume of poems. They were published by Cadell, and it will not be thought very surprising that the first poems of a young man, at that time quite unknown to the world, should in the lapse of fifty years have become out of print. His next performances may, with sufficient trouble, be obtained. They are the poems of “Gebir,” “Chrysaor,” the “Phocæans,” &c., and the very high encomiums passed upon “Gebir” by Southey, with whom Landor was not acquainted till some twelve years afterwards, were accounted as sufficient fame by their author. Southey’s eulogy of the poem appeared in the Critical Review, to the great anger of Gifford, whose translation of “Juvenal” was by no means so much praised in the same number. One of the most strikingly characteristic facts in connection with Mr. Landor is, that while he has declared his own doubts as to whether Nature intended him for a poet, “because he could never please himself by anything he ever did of that kind,” it must be perfectly evident to everybody who knows his writings, that he never took the least pains to please the public. The consequences were almost inevitable.

After leaving Trinity, Mr. Landor passed some months in London, learning Italian, and avoiding all society ; he then retired to Swansea, where he wrote “Gebir”—lived in comparative solitude—made love—and was happy.

The “attitude” in which the critical literati of the time received the poem of “Gebir,” was very much the same as though such a work had never been published. A well-written critique, however, did appear as one exception, in a northern provincial paper, in which Mr. Landor was compared, in certain respects, with Goëthe ; another we have also seen, which was full of grandly eloquent and just expressions of appreciation—printed, we believe, in Aberdeen, within two years since, and signed G. G. ;—but the earliest was written by Southey, as previously stated. No doubt Mr. Landor has read the latter, but it is his habit (and

one more common among authors of original genius than is at all suspected) never to read critiques upon himself. His feeling towards this department of literature may be estimated by his offer of a hot penny roll and a pint of stout, for breakfast (!) to any critic who could write one of his Imaginary Conversations—an indigestible pleasantry which horribly enraged more than one critic of the time. Of "Gebir," however, Coleridge was accustomed to speak in terms of great praise; till one day he heard Southey speak of it with equal admiration, after which Coleridge altered his mind—'he did *not* admire it—he must have been mistaken.'

A few biographical memoranda of Mr. Landor will be found interesting, previous to offering some remarks on his genius and works. During the time he was studying Italian in London, after leaving Trinity, his godfather, General Powell, was anxious that he should enter the army, for which he seemed peculiarly adapted, excepting that he entertained republican principles which "would not do there." This proposal being negatived, his father offered to allow him 400*l.* per annum, if he would adopt the law and reside in the Temple; but he declared that he would allow him but little more than one-third of that sum, if he refused. Of course Walter Landor well knew that he might have enjoyed a gay London life with 400*l.* per annum, in the Temple, and neglected the law, as, here and there, a young gentleman of the Temple is apt to do; he, however, preferred to avoid false pretences, accepted the smaller income, and studied Italian.

Mr. Landor wrote verses in Italian at this period, which were not very good, yet not perhaps worse than Milton's. The poetry of Italy did not captivate his more severely classical taste at first; he says it seemed to him "like the juice of grapes and melons left on yesterday's plate." He had just been reading Æschylus, Sophocles, and Pindar. But his opinion was altered directly he read Dante, which he did not do till some years afterwards.

That his uncle was not so far wrong in thinking Landor well suited to a military life, the following anecdote will serve to attest.—At the breaking out of the Spanish war against the French, he was the first Englishman who landed in Spain. He raised a few troops

at his own expense and conducted them from Corunna to Aguilar, the head-quarters of Gen. Blake, Viceroy of Galicia. For this he received the thanks of the Supreme Junta in the Madrid Gazette, together with an acknowledgment of the donation of 20,000 *reals* from Mr. Landor. He returned the letters and documents, with his commission, to Don Pedro Cevallos, on the subversion of the Constitution by Ferdinand,—telling Don Pedro that he was willing to aid a people in the assertion of its liberties against the antagonist of Europe, but that he could have nothing to do with a perjurer and traitor.

Mr. Landor went to Paris in the beginning of the century, where he witnessed the ceremony of Napoleon being made Consul for life, amidst the acclamations of multitudes. He subsequently saw the dethroned and deserted Emperor pass through Tours on his way to embark, as he intended, for America. Napoleon was attended only by a single servant, and descended at the Prefecture, unrecognized by any-body excepting Landor. The people of Tours were most hostile to Napoleon; Landor had always felt a hatred towards him, and now he had but to point one finger at him, and it would have done what all the artillery of twenty years of war had failed to do. The people would have torn him to pieces. Need it be said Landor was too “good a hater,” and too noble a man, to avail himself of such an opportunity. He held his breath, and let the hero pass. Perhaps, after all, there was no need of any of this hatred on the part of Mr. Landor, who, in common with many other excessively wilful men, were probably as much exasperated at Napoleon’s commanding successes, as at his falling off from pure republican principles. Howbeit, Landor’s great hatred, and yet “greater” forbearance are hereby chronicled.

In 1806, Mr. Landor sold several estates in Warwickshire which had been in his family nearly seven hundred years, and purchased Lantony and Comjoy in Monmouthshire, where he laid out nearly £70,000. Here he made extensive improvements, giving employment daily, for many years, to between twenty and thirty labourers in building and planting. He made a road, at his own expense, of eight miles long, and planted and fenced half a million of trees. The infa-

mous behaviour of some tenants caused him to leave the country. At this time he had a million more trees all ready to plant, which, as he observed, "were lost to the country by driving me from it. I may speak of *their* utility, if I must not of my own." The two chief offenders were brothers who rented farms of Mr. Landor to the amount of £1500 per annum, and were to introduce an improved system of Suffolk husbandry. Mr. Landor got no rent from them, but all manner of atrocious annoyances. They even rooted up his trees and destroyed whole plantations. They paid nobody. When neighbours and workpeople applied for money, Mr. Landor says, "they were referred to the Devil, with their wives and families, while these brothers had their two bottles of wine upon the table. As for the Suffolk system of agriculture, wheat was sown upon the last of May, and cabbages for winter food were planted in August or September." Mr. Landor eventually remained master of the field, and drove his tormentors across the seas; but so great was his disgust at these circumstances that he resolved to leave England. Before his departure he caused his house, which had cost him some 8000*l* to be taken down, that his son might never have the chance of similar vexations in that place.

In 1811, Mr. Landor married Julia, the daughter of J. Thuillier de Malaperte, descendant and representative of the Baron de Neuve-ville, first gentleman of the bed-chamber to Charles the Eighth. He went to reside in Italy in 1815, and during several years occupied the Palazzo Medici, in Florence. Subsequently he purchased the beautiful and romantic villa of Count Gherardesca at Fiesole, with its gardens and farms, scarcely a quarter of an hour's walk from the ancient villa of Lorenzo de' Medici, and resided there many years in comparative solitude.

Of the difference between the partialities of the public, and the eventual judgments of the people; between a deeply-founded fame and an ephemeral interest, few more striking examples will perhaps be discovered in future years than in the solitary course of Walter Savage Landor amidst the various "lights of his day." He has incontestibly displayed original genius as a writer; the highest critical faculty—that sympathy with genius and knowledge which can only result from imagination

and generous love of truth—and also a fine scholarship in the spirit as well as the letter of classical attainments. But the public, tacitly, has denied his claims, or worse—admitted them with total indifference,—letting fall from its benumbed fingers, work after work, not because any one ventured to say, or perhaps even to think, the books were unworthy, but because the hands were cold. A writer of original genius may be popular in his lifetime, as sometimes, occurs, by means of certain talents and tacts comprehended in his genius; by the aid of startling novelties, or by broad and general effects; and by the excitement of adventitious circumstances;—on which ground is to be worked the problem of Lord Byron's extensive popularity with the very same daily and yearly reading public that made mocks and mowes at Coleridge, and Wordsworth, and Shelley, and Keats. But as a general rule, the originality of a man, say and do what he may, is necessarily in itself an argument against his rapid popularity. In the case of Mr. Landor, however, other causes than the originality of his faculty have opposed his favour with the public. He has the most select audience perhaps,—the fittest, fewest,—of any distinguished author of the day; and this of his choice. "Give me," he said in one of his prefaces, "ten accomplished men for readers, and I am content;"—and the event does not by any means so far as we could desire, outstrip the modesty, or despair, or disdain, of this aspiration. He writes criticism for critics, and poetry for poets: his drama, when he is dramatic, will suppose neither pit nor gallery, nor critics, nor dramatic laws. He is not a publican among poets—he does not sell his Amreeta cups upon the highway. He delivers them rather with the dignity of a giver, to ticketed persons; analyzing their flavour and fragrance with a learned delicacy, and an appeal to the esoteric. His very spelling of English is uncommon and theoretic. He has a vein of humour which by its own nature is peculiarly subtle and evasive; he therefore refines upon it, by his art, in order to prevent anybody discovering it without a grave, solicitous, and courtly approach, which is unspeakably ridiculous to all the parties concerned, and which no doubt the author secretly enjoys. And as if poetry were not, in English, a sufficiently unpopular dead language, he has had recourse to writing poetry in Latin;

with dissertations on the Latin tongue, to fence it out doubly from the populace. "*Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo.*"

Whether Mr. Landor writes Latin or English poetry or prose, he does it all with a certain artistic composure, as if he knew what he was doing, and respected the cunning of his right hand. At times he displays an equal respect for its wilfulness. In poetry, his "*Gebir*," the "*Phocæans*" and some other performances take a high classic rank. He can put out extraordinary power both in description and situation; but the vitality, comprehended in the power, does not overflow along the inferior portions of the work, so as to sustain them to the level of the reader's continued attention. The poet rather builds up to his own elevations than carries them out and on; and the reader passes from admiration to admiration, by separate states or shocks and not by a continuity of interest through the intervals of emotion. Thus it happens that his best dramatic works,—those, the impression of which on the mind is most definite and excellent,—are fragmentary; and that his complete dramas are not often read through twice, even by readers who applaud them, but for the sake of a particular act or scene.

A remark should be made on Mr. Landor's blank verse, in which the poems just named, and several others, are written. It is the very best of the regular-syllable class, the versification of "*numbers*," as they have been characteristically called by the schools. His blank verse is not only the most regular that ever was written, but it is the most sweet, and far less monotonous than we should expect of a musical system which excluded occasional discords. It has all the effect of the most melodious rhyming heroic verse; indeed, it often gives the impression of elegiac verses in rhyme. As blank verse it is a very bad model. There is more freedom in his dramatic verse, and always the purest style.

His dramatic works (except the compact little scenes entitled "*Pentalogia*," which are admirable,) are written upon an essentially undramatic principle; or, more probably, on no principle at all. Mr. Landor well knows "*all the laws*," and they seem to provoke his will to be lawless. In this species of drama-looking composition he displays at times the finest passion, the

most pure and perfect style of dramatic dialogue, and an intensity of mental movements, with their invisible, undeclared, yet necessarily tragic results; all of which proves him to possess the most wonderful three-fourths of a great dramatic genius which ever appeared in the world. But the fourth part is certainly wanting by way of making good his ground to the eyes, and ears, and understanding of the masses. In his "Andrea of Hungary," the action does not commence till the last scene of the third act; and is not continued in the first scene of the fourth! Instead of the expected continuation, after all this patience, the confounded reader has his breath taken away by the sauntering entrance of Boccacio—the novelist—accompanied by Fiammetta, who having nothing whatever to do with the drama, the former sings her little song! This extremely free-and-easy style of treading the boards is so very new and delightful that it excites the idea of *continuing* the scene by the introduction of the Genius of the Drama, with a paper speech coming out of his mouth, on which is inscribed the Laws of Concentration and Continuity, the Laws of Progressive action, and the Art of Construction. To whom, *Enter the Author, with a cast-net*. He makes his cast to admiration; trips up the heels of the Genius of the Drama, and leaves it sprawling. It is his own doing.

In whatever Mr. Landor writes, his power, when he puts it forth, is of the first order. He is classical in the highest sense. His conceptions stand out, clearly cut and fine, in a magnitude and nobility as far as possible removed from the small and sickly vagueness common to this century of letters. If he seems obscure at times, it is from no infirmity or inadequacy of thought or word, but from extreme concentration, and involution in brevity—for a short string can be tied in a knot, as well as a long one. He can be tender, as the strong can best be; and his pathos, when it comes, is profound. His descriptions are full and startling; his thoughts, self-produced and bold; and he has the art of taking a common-place under a new aspect, and of leaving the Roman brick, marble. In marble indeed, he seems to work; for there is an angularity in the workmanship, whether of prose or verse, which the very exquisiteness of the polish renders more conspicuous. You may complain too of hearing the chise

but after all, you applaud the work—it is a work well done. The elaboration produces no sense of heaviness,—the severity of the outline does not militate against beauty;—if it is cold, it is also noble—if not impulsive, it is suggestive. As a writer of Latin poems, he ranks with our most successful scholars and poets; having less harmony and majesty than Milton had,—when he aspired to that species of “Life in Death,”—but more variety and freedom of utterance. Mr. Landor’s English prose writings possess most of the characteristics of his poetry; only they are more perfect in their class. His “Pericles and Aspasia,” and “Pentameron,” are books for the world and for all time, whenever the world and time shall come to their senses about them; complete in beauty of sentiment and subtlety of criticism. His general style is highly scholastic and elegant,—his sentences have articulations, if such an expression may be permitted, of very excellent proportions. And, abounding in striking images and thoughts, he is remarkable for making clear the ground around them, and for lifting them, like statues to pedestals, where they may be seen most distinctly, and strike with the most enduring though often the most gradual impression. This is the case both in his prose works and his poetry. It is more conspicuously true of some of his smaller poems, which for quiet classic grace and tenderness, and exquisite care in their polish, may best be compared with beautiful cameos and vases of the antique.

Two works should be mentioned—one of which is only known to a few among his admirers, and the other not at all. Neither of them were published, and though printed they were very little circulated. The first is entitled, “Poems from the Arabic and Persian.” They pretended to be translations, but were written by Landor for the pleasure of misleading certain orientalists, and other learned men. In this he succeeded, and for the first time in the known history of such hoaxes, *not* to the discredit of the credulous, for the poems are extremely beautiful, and breathe the true oriental spirit throughout. They are ornate in fancy,—graceful, and full of unaffected tenderness. They were printed in 1800, with many extremely erudite notes; in writing which, the author, no doubt, laughed very much to himself at the critical labour and searching they would

excite. The other production is called "A Satire upon Satirists, and Admonition to Detractors," printed in 1836. It contains many just indignations, terrible denunciations, and cleaving blows against those who used not many years since to make a rabid crusade upon all genius; but the satire occasionally makes attacks upon some who do not deserve to be so harshly treated by a brother author; and we cannot but rejoice that this satire (in its present state) has not been published.

Mr. Landor's wit and humour are of a very original kind, as previously remarked. Perhaps in none of his writings does their peculiarity occur so continuously as in a series of Letters, entitled "High and Low Life in Italy." Every sarcasm, irony, jest, or touch of humour, is secreted beneath the skin of each tingling member of his sentences. His wit and his humour are alike covered up amidst various things, apparently intended to lead the reader astray, as certain birds are wont to do when you approach the nests that contain their broods. Or, the main jests and knotty points of a paragraph are planed down to the smooth level of the rest of the sentences, so that the reader may walk over them without knowing anything of the matter. All this may be natural to his genius; it may also result from pride, or perversity. So far from seeking the public, his genius has displayed a sort of apathy, if not antipathy, to popularity; *therefore*, the public must court it, if they would enjoy it; to possess yourself of his wit you must scrutinize; to be let into the secret of his humour you must advance "pointing the toe." Such are the impressions derivable from Mr. Landor's writings. In private social intercourse nothing of the kind is apparent, and there are few men whose conversation is more unaffected, manly, pleasing, and instructive.

The imagination of Mr. Landor is richly graphic, classic, and subtly refined. In portraying a character, his imagination identifies itself with the mentality and the emotions of its inner being, and all those idiosyncracies which may be said to exist between a man and himself, but with which few, if anybody else, have any business. In other respects, most of his characters—especially those of his own invention—might live, think, move, and have their being in space, so little does their author trouble himself with their corporeal conditions.

Whether it be that their author feels his own *physique* so strongly that it does not occur to him that any one else can need such a thing—he will find all that for them—or that it is the habit of his genius to abstract itself from corporeal realities, (partly from the perverse love a man continually has of being his own “opposite,”) and ascend into a more subtle element of existence,—certain it is that many of his characters are totally without material or definite *form*; appear to live nowhere, and upon nothing, and to be very independent agents, to whom practical action seldom or never occurs. “They think, therefore they are.” They feel, and know (they are apt too often to know as much as their author) therefore they are characters. But they are usually without bodily substance: and such form as they seem to have, is an abstraction which plays round them, but might go off in air at any time, and the loss be scarcely apparent. The designs of his larger works, as wholes, are also deficient in compactness of form, precision of outline, and condensation. They often seem wild, not at all intellectually, but from ungoverned will. It is difficult not to arrive at conclusions of this kind—though different minds will, of course, see differently—after a careful study of the dramas of “Andrea of Hungary,” “Giovanna of Naples,” and “Fra Rupert;” the “Pericles and Aspasia,” the “Pentameron and Pentalogia,” &c. The very title of the “Imaginary Conversations” gives a strong foretaste of Mr. Landor’s predominating ideality, and dismissal of mortal bonds and conditions. The extraordinary productions last named are as though their author had been rarified while listening to the conversation, or the double soliloquies, of august Shades; all of which he had carefully written down on resuming his corporeality, and where his memory failed him he had supplied the deficiency with some sterling stuff of his own. The Landorean “peeps” seen through these etherial dialogues and soliloquies of the mighty dead, are seldom to be mistaken; and though hardly at times in accordance with their company, are seldom unworthy of the highest.

As a partial exception to some of the foregoing remarks, should be mentioned the “Examination of William Shakspeare before Sir Thomas Lucy, Knt., touching Deer-stealing.” Of all the thousands of books that

have issued from the press about Shakspeare, this one of Mr. Landor's is by far the most admirable. It is worth them all. There is the high-water mark of genius upon every page, lit by as true a sun as ever the ocean mirrored. Perfect and inimitable from beginning to end, that it has not become the most popular of all the books relating to Shakspeare, is only to be accounted for by some perversity or dulness of the public. The book is, certainly, not read. There is great love and reading bestowed upon every cant about Shakspeare, and much interest has been shown in all the hoaxes. Perhaps the public thought this book was authentic.

In an age of criticism like this, when to "take" a position over a man and his work, is supposed to include proportionally superior powers of judgment, though not one discovery, argument, or searching remark, be adduced in proof; when analysis is publicly understood to mean everything that can be done for the attainment of a correct estimate, and the very term, alone, of synthesis looks pedantic and *outrè*; and when any anonymous young man may gravely seat himself, in the fancy of his unknowing readers, far above an author who may have published works—of genius, learning, or knowledge and experience, at the very period that his *We Judge* was perhaps learning to write at school,—it is only becoming in an attempt like that of the present paper, to disclaim all assumption of finality of judgment upon a noble veteran of established genius, concerning whom there has never yet been one philosophically elaborated criticism. To be the first to "break ground" upon the broad lands of the authors of characters and scenes from real life, is often rather a perilous undertaking for any known critic who values his reputation; but to unlock the secret chambers of an ethereal inventiveness, and pronounce at once upon its contents, would only manifest the most short-sighted presumption. Simply to have unlocked such chambers for the entrance of others, were task enough for one contemporary.

Any sincere and mature opinions of the master of an art are always valuable, and not the less so when commenting upon established reputations, or those about which a contest still exists. We may thus be shaken in our faith, or confirmed in it. Mr. Landor's mode of expressing his opinion often amounts to appealing to

an inner sense for a corroboration of the truth. He says, in a letter to a friend, "I found the 'Faery Queen' the most delightful book in the world to fall asleep upon by the sea-side. Geoffrey Chaucer always kept me wide awake, and beat at a distance all other English poets but Shakspeare and Milton. In many places Keats approaches him." After remarking on the faults and occasional affectations discoverable in two or three of the earliest poems of that true and beautiful genius, Mr. Landor adds that he considers "no poet (always excepting Shakspeare) displays so many happy expressions, or so vivid a fancy as Keats. A few hours in the Pæcile with the Tragedians would have made him all he wanted—majestically sedate. I wonder if any remorse has overtaken his murderers.

Mr. Landor is not at all the product of the present age; he scarcely belongs to it; he has no direct influence upon it: but he has been an influence to some of its best teachers, and to some of the most refined illustrators of its vigorous spirit. For the rest—for the duty, the taste, or the favor of posterity—when a succession of publics shall have slowly accumulated a residuum of "golden opinions" in the shape of pure admiring verdicts of competent minds, then only, if ever, will he attain his just estimation in the not altogether impartial roll of Fame. If ever?—the words fell from the pen—and the manly voice of him to whom they were applied, seems to call from his own clear altitude, "Let the words remain." For in the temple of posterity there have hitherto always appeared some immortalities which had better have burned out, while some great works, or names, or both, have been suffered to drift away into oblivion. That such is likely to be the fate of the writings of Walter Savage Landor, nobody can for a moment believe; but were it so destined, and he could foresee the result, one can imagine his taking a secret pleasure in this resolution of his works into their primitive elements.

WILLIAM AND MARY HOWITT.

"While the still morn went out with sandals grey,
He touched the tender stops of *various quills*,
With eager thought, warbling his Doric lay :
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay ;
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue :
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new."—LYCIDAS.

"And all was conscience and tender heart.

* * * * *

And so discreet and fair of eloquence,
So *bénigne* and so digne of reverence,
And couldè so the people's heart embrace,
That each her loveth that looketh on her face.

* * * * *

Published was the bounty of her name,
And eke beside in many a region :
If one saith well, another saith the same.

* * * * *

There n' as discord, rancour, or heaviness,
In all the land, that she ne could appease,
And wisely bring them all in heartes ease."—CHAUCER.

THE numerous literary labours of William and Mary Howitt, are so inextricably and so interestingly mixed up with their biographies, that they can only be appropriately treated under one head.

William Howitt is a native of Derbyshire, where his family have been considerable landed proprietors for many generations. In the reign of Elizabeth a Thomas Howitt, Esq., married a Miss Middleton, and on the division of the estate, of which she was co-heiress, the manors of Wansley and Eastwood fell to the lot of Mrs. Howitt, who came to reside with her husband at Wansley Hall in Nottinghamshire.

The Howitts—according to a memoir of their early days, now out of print, and of which we shall avail ourselves, as far as it goes, having ascertained its authenticity—the Howitts appear to have been of the old school of country squires, who led a jolly, careless life—hunting, shooting, feasting, and leaving their estate to take care of itself as it might, and which, of course, fell into a steady consumption. The broad lands of Wansley and Eastwood slipped away piece-meal ; Wansley Hall and its surrounding demesne followed ; the rectory of

Eastwood, which had been a comfortable berth for a younger son, was the last portion of Miss Middleton's dowry, which lingered in the family, and that was eventually sold to the Pluntre family, in which it yet remains. The rectors of Eastwood appear, from family documents, to have very faithfully followed out such an education as they may be supposed to have received from their parents. They were more devoted to the field than the pulpit; and the exploits of the last rector of the name of Howitt and old Squire Rolleston, of Watnall, are not yet forgotten.

The demesne of one heiress being dissipated, there was not wanting another with which to repair the waste with her gold. The great-grandfather of our author married the daughter and sole heiress of a gentleman of Nottinghamshire, with whom he received a large sum in money. This was soon spent, and so much was the lady's father exasperated at the hopeless waste of his son-in-law, that he cut off his own daughter with a shilling, and left the estate to an adopted son. The disinherited man did not, however, learn wisdom from this lesson, unless he considered it wisdom "to daff the world aside and let it pass; he adhered stoutly to the hereditary habits and maxims of his ancestors; and a wealthy old aunt of his, residing at Derby, getting a suspicion that he only waited her death to squander her hoard too, adopted the stratagem of sending a messenger to Heanor to announce to him the melancholy intelligence of her decease. The result justified her fears. The jolly squire liberally rewarded the messenger, and setting the village bells a-ringing, began his journey towards Derby to take possession. To his great consternation and chagrin, however, instead of finding the lady dead, he found her very much alive indeed, and ready to receive him with a most emphatic announcement. that she had followed the example of his father-in-law, and had struck him out of her will altogether. She faithfully kept her word. The only legacy which she left to this jovial spendthrift was his great two-handled breakfast pot, out of which he consumed every morning as much toast and ale as would have "filled" a baron of the fourteenth century.

This old gentleman seems to have been not only of a most reckless, but also of an unresentful disposition. He appears to have continued a familiar intercourse with the gentleman who superseded him in the estate,

who likewise maintained towards him a conduct that was very honourable. The disinherited squire was one of the true Squire Western-school, and spent the remainder of his life in a manner particularly characteristic of the times. He and another dilapidated old gentleman of the name of Johnson, used to proceed from house to house amongst their friends, till probably they had scarcely a home of their own, carousing and drinking "jolly good ale and old." They sojourned a long time at one of these places, regularly going out with the greyhounds in the morning, or if it were summer, a-fishing, and carousing in the evenings, till one day the butler gave them a hint, by announcing that "the barrel was out." On this they proceeded to Lord Middleton's, at Wollerton, and after a similar career and a similar carousing, to the house of a gentleman in Lincolnshire. The building of Wollerton Hall, it is said, had considerably impoverished the Middleton family; but Lord Middleton was unmarried; and as the Lincolnshire gentleman had an only daughter and a splendid fortune, family tradition says, that by extolling the parties to each other a match was brought about by these old gentlemen, much to the satisfaction of both sides; and they were made free of the cellar and the greyhounds for the remainder of their lives.

The son of this spendthrift, instead of being possessor of an estate, became a manager of a part of it for the fortunate proprietor. There was, however, a friendly feeling always kept up between the new proprietors and the Howitts, and by this means the father of our author—who was a man of a different stamp from his progenitors—was enabled, in some degree, to restore the fortunes of the family, and to establish a handsome property. Miss Tantum, whom he married, was a member of the Society of Friends, as her ancestors had been from the commencement of the Society; and Mr. Thomas Howitt, previous to his marriage, as was required by the rules of the Friends, entered the Society, and has always continued in it.

William Howitt, the subject of the present biographical sketch, is one of six brothers. He was educated at different schools of the Friends; but, as we have frequently heard him declare, was much more indebted to a steady practice of self-instruction than to any school or teacher whatever. He early showed a predilection

for poetry, and in a periodical of that day, called "Literary Recreations," a copy of some verses "On Spring" may be found, stated to be by "William Howitt, a boy 13 years of age." During the time that he was not at school, he was accustomed, with his eldest brother, to stroll all over the country, shooting, coursing, and fishing, with an indefatigable zeal which would have delighted any of the Nimrods from whom he was descended. As a boy he had been an eager birds'-nester, and these after pursuits, together with a strong poetical temperament, and a keen perception of the beauties of nature, made him familiar with all the haunts, recesses, productions, and creatures of the country. In this manner the greatest portion of his early life was spent. After he arrived at manhood, however, those country pleasures were blended with an active study of Chemistry, Botany, Natural and Moral Philosophy, and of the works of the best writers of Italy, France, and his own country. He also turned the attention of his youngest brother, now Dr. Howitt, to the study of British Botany, and the Doctor has since prosecuted it with more constancy and success than himself. General literature, and poetry, soon drew his attention more forcibly, and his marriage, in his twenty eighth year, no doubt naturally contributed to strengthen this tendency. The lady of his choice was Miss Mary Botham, of Uttoxeter, in Staffordshire, also a member of the Society of Friends, and now familiar to the public as the delightful authoress, Mary Howitt.

Mary Howitt is, by her mother's side, directly descended from Mr. William Wood, the Irish patentee, about whose halfpence, minted under a contract from the Government of George II., Dean Swift raised such a disturbance with his "Drapier's Letters," successfully preventing the issue of the coinage, and saddling Mr. Wood with a loss of £60,000, Sir Robert Walpole, the minister, resisting all recompense for his loss, although Sir Isaac Newton, who was appointed to assay the coinage, pronounced it better than the contract required, and Mr. Wood, of course, justly entitled to remuneration.* His son, Mr. Charles Wood, the grandfather of Mrs. Howitt, and who became assay-master in Jamaica, was the first who introduced platinum into Europe.

* See Ruding's "Annals of Coinage."

Mr. Howitt on his marriage went to reside in Staffordshire, and continued there about a year. Mrs. Howitt and himself being of the most congenial taste and disposition, determined to publish jointly a volume of poetry. This appeared under the title of "The Forest Minstrel," in 1823. It was highly applauded by the press, and is sufficiently characteristic of both its writers—the irresistible tendency of one to describe natural scenery, and the legendary propensities of the other.

Soon after their marriage they undertook a walk into Scotland, having long admired warmly the ballad poetry and traditions of that country. In this ramble, after landing at Dumbarton, they went on over mountain and moorland wherever they proposed to go, for one thousand miles, walking more than five hundred of it, Mrs. Howitt performing the journey without fatigue. They crossed Ben Lomond without a guide, and after enjoying the most magnificent spectacle of the clouds alternately shrouding and breaking away from the chaos of mountains around them, were enveloped by a dense cloud, and only able to effect their descent with great difficulty, and with considerable hazard. They visited Loch Katrine, Stirling, Edinburgh, and all the beautiful scenery for many miles around it, traversed Fifeshire, and then, taking Abbotsford in their route, walked through the more Southern parts, visiting many places interesting for their historical or poetical associations, on to Gretna Green, where all the villagers turned out brimfull of mirth, supposing they were come there to be married, especially as they entered the public house where such matches are completed, and engaged the landlord to put them in the way to Carlisle. They returned by way of the English lakes, having, as they have been frequently heard to declare, enjoyed the most delightful journey imaginable.

Soon after their return, they settled in Nottingham; Mr. Howitt, though actively engaged in business, still devoting his leisure to literary pursuits. Here they soon published another joint volume of poems, called "The Desolation of Eyam," which was received with equal favour by the public. The attention which these two volumes excited, brought many applications from the editors of Annuals and Magazines; and both Mr. and Mrs. Howitt for some years contributed a great variety of articles to these publications.

Mr. Howitt possesses such versatility that there are few quarters of literature in which his contributions would not equal the best. His papers in the "Heads of the People" were excellent. Mrs. Howitt's ballads have the true ballad spirit, and some of them are of exceeding sweetness. Her simplicity is without feebleness, and her occasional openings into power are striking and noble.

The circumstance of their names having become attached to so many separate articles, now led to a separate publication of volumes. Mrs. Howitt has since published "The Seven Temptations," a dramatic work; "Wood Leighton," a prose fiction, and several volumes for the young, all of which have acquired deserved popularity.

Within the last half century, a somewhat new class of writing has been introduced into this country with great success, and most fortunately for the public taste, as its influence is most healthy and sweet, most refreshing and soothing, most joyous, yet most innocent. It is that of the unaffected prose pastoral. After Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia," there was no work which had so much of this spirit of the green fields and woods, as Walton's "Complete Angler." A long period then intervened, and the same feeling can hardly be said to have shown itself, excepting in some of the works of Mrs. Barbauld, until the time of Burns, and Wordsworth, and Keats, in poetry, and Miss Mitford and Leigh Hunt, in prose. The numerous essays and delightful papers of Leigh Hunt, and one little work in particular, entitled "The Months," together with the pastoral sketches of "Our Village," "Belford Regis," and "Country Stories," are known to all. These works of Miss Mitford, if read by snatches, come over the mind as the summer air and the sweet hum of rural sounds would float upon the senses through an open window in the country; leaving with you for a whole day, a tradition of fragrance and dew. It is hardly necessary to add, that her prose pastorals are all redolent of a cordial and cheerful spirit. They are the poetry of matter-of-fact nature, fresh and at first hand. Who would not fain leave their other matters-of-fact, to go with these writers to gather lilies of the valley from the deep green woods? Sooth to say, if the seasons in England were always as they paint them, we

should all choose to live out of doors, and nobody would catch cold.

Miss Mitford is undoubtedly at the head of this delightful, and at present "small family" of prose pastoral writers. William and Mary Howitt naturally belong to it; and if another were to be named of the present time, it would be Thomas Miller. But no one has done so much, systematically, and extensively to make us familiar with the rural population, both of our own country and of Germany, as Mr. Howitt.

In 1832, Mr. Howitt produced the "Book of the Seasons," a volume the publication of which was attended by a circumstance curious in itself, and which should teach young authors not to be discouraged by the opinions of publishers. The "Book of the Seasons," was offered to four of the principal publishing houses and rejected by them; till the author, in disgust, told the gentleman in whose hands it was left, to tie a stone to the MS., and fling it over London Bridge. At length Colburn and Bentley took it: the press with one simultaneous cheer of approbation saluted its appearance; it has since gone through seven large editions.

In 1834, Mr. Howitt published a work of a very different description, the "History of Priestcraft," which ran through six or seven editions, some of them of 3000 copies each. The work, of course, excited as much reprehension from one party as applause from another; but the readers of the "Book of the Seasons," which is full of kindly and gentle feelings, could not comprehend how the same spirit could produce both these works. The union is, nevertheless, perfectly compatible.

It should be recollected that Mr. Howitt was born and educated a Quaker, and he had imbued himself with the writings and spirit of the first Quakers, who were a sturdy race, and suffered much persecution from the Established Church.

In 1835, our author published "Pantika, or Traditions of the most Ancient Times," a work of imagination, certainly the most ambitious, and not the least successful, though not the least popular of all Mr. Howitt's many admirable productions. But its design, its materials and execution are altogether so different from every other work of the Howitts, that its claims will be more appropriately considered under the head of "Mrs.

Shelley and the imaginative romance writers," in Vol. II. of the present work.

The publication of the "History of Priestcraft" may be said to have driven our author from Nottingham. Till then he lived in great privacy; but this volume discovered to his townsmen that he possessed political opinions. He appeared then as the advocate of popular rights, and in that town there is a considerable portion of the population which has always been greatly in want of zealous and able leaders. These seized on Mr. Howitt as a champion unexpectedly found. He was in a manner forced at once, and contrary to his habits and inclination, into public life. He was called upon to arrange and address public meetings. He was made an alderman of the borough, and looked to as the advocate of all popular measures. It was found that, although unused to public speaking, he possessed a vehement eloquence which excited his hearers to enthusiasm, and carried them according to his will. A speech of his in the Town Hall, on some Irish question, in which he introduced some remarks on O'Connell, so agitated his hearers, that they simultaneously announced their determination to invite O'Connell to a public dinner, which they forthwith did. It was hoped by the people of Nottingham that they had found a man amply capable and willing to advocate their interests; but this was not the life which Mr. Howitt had marked out for himself. No sphere could have afforded a greater opportunity of doing good to his fellow-men than the one he now occupied, but to do that it required an independent fortune. Mr. Howitt's was limited; and finding his time and energies wholly absorbed by extraneous circumstances, he deemed it his duty to his children to withdraw to a more secluded place of residence. He therefore removed to Esher, in Surrey, a place which gave him the fullest retirement, in a beautiful country, while it afforded a ready communication with the metropolis. There he resided some years.

Before leaving Nottingham, his fellow-townsmen, in a very numerous public meeting, voted him a silver inkstand, as an appropriate testimony of their esteem; and, before settling at Esher, he and Mrs. Howitt made another excursion into the North of England, Scotland, and the Western Isles, traversing the most interesting portions of their journey again on foot. They spent a

short time with Mr. Wordsworth and his family at Rydal, and in Edinburgh made the personal acquaintance of most of the literary and eminent characters there. Mr. Howitt also attended a dinner given by the city of Edinburgh to the poet Campbell, and being requested to give as a toast "the English poets, Wordsworth, Southey, and Moore," he took the opportunity of pressing on the attention of that brilliant company, that if toasting poets did them honour, the true way to serve them was to secure them their "copy-right."

During Mr. Howitt's residence at Esher, he published the "Rural Life of England," having previously traversed the country literally from the Land's End to the Scottish borders, to make himself intimately acquainted with the manners and mode of life of the rural population. The work is eminently popular; and while it is full of the kindly and cheerful spirit of the "Book of the Seasons," has yet higher claims to public favour even than that most pleasant work, from the more exalted nature of its subject, and the enlightened and philosophical views which it takes of society generally.

In 1838, Mr. Howitt published a work entitled "Colonization and Christianity," a popular history of the treatment of the natives by the Europeans in all their colonies; a work which proves that the writer's philanthropic sympathy is not confined to any race or nation, and unfolds a dark chapter in the history of human nature, and which could hardly fail to produce the most extensive and beneficial effects. In fact, the reading of this volume led Mr. Joseph Pease, Jun., immediately to establish "The British India Society," in which the zealous exertions of Mr. Pease have mainly contributed to the adoption of a new policy by the East India Company, pregnant with the most important benefits to this country;—to the liberation of all their slaves, no less than *ten millions* in number, and to the cultivation of cotton, sugar, and other tropical articles for our market, by which, if continued, not only will the poor population of India be employed, but the manufacturing millions of our own country too, by the constant demand for our manufactured goods; of which every year already brings the most striking and cheering evidences.

Soon after this, Mr. Howitt published a little book, which has gladdened many a fireside, called "The Boys' Country Book," a Genuine life of a country boy—being

evidently his own life. 'The Boys' Country Book was followed by "Visits to Remarkable places, Old Halls, Battle Fields, and Scenes illustrative of striking Passages in English History and Poetry." This book was received with enthusiasm; and though an expensive work, had a large sale, and was followed by a second volume. These works soon found a host of imitators, and have had the beneficial effect of reminding the public of the valuable stores of historic and poetic interest scattered over the whole face of our noble country. Mrs. Howitt's attention had for years been turned to works for the young. They were written for the amusement and benefit of her own children, and being tested by the actual approbation of this little domestic auditory, were afterwards published and received with equal applause by the young wherever the English language extends. Up to this period she had issued;—The Sketches of Natural History.—Tales in Verse; and Tales in Prose.—Birds and Flowers.—Hymns and Fireside Verses.* The popularity of these works induced a publisher (Mr. Tegg) to propose to Mrs. Howitt to write for him a series of "Tales for the People and their Children;" of which ten volumes have already appeared, namely;—1. Strive and Thrive.—2. Hope on, Hope ever.—3. Sowing and Reaping.—4. Who shall be Greatest?—5. Which is the Wiser?—6. Little Coin much Care.—7. Work and Wages.—8. Alice Franklin.—9. Love and Money. These volumes have never been introduced to the public by reviews, and it seems to be a system of Mr. Tegg's never to send copies to reviews; nevertheless they have had a vast circulation, and are scattered all over America in six-penny reprints. They are in themselves a little juvenile library of the most interesting narratives, full of goodness of heart, and sincere moral principles. Translations of "Birds and Flowers" are in progress both in German and Polish, and all the works of William and Mary Howitt are immediately reprinted and extensively circulated in America.

Having resided about three years at Esher, Mr. and Mrs. Howitt quitted England for a sojourn in Germany. They had for some time had their attention drawn to

* We must not allow ourselves to be so overcome by a sense of the abundance of the Howitts', as to omit our tribute to the beauty of Mary Howitt's poetical productions, which are not, we think, sufficiently estimated in this article.—Ep.

German literature; and the alleged advantages attending education in Germany, made them resolve to judge for themselves. Attracted by the beauty of the scenery, they took up their head quarters at Heidelberg, where their children could steadily pursue their education. Thence, at different times, they visited nearly every part and every large city of Germany, assiduously exerting themselves by social intercourse with the people, as well as by study, to make themselves perfectly familiar with the manners, spirit, and literature of that great and varied nation. During upwards of three years thus spent, with the exception of Mrs. Howitt's continuing the series of "Tales for the People," and editing "Fisher's Drawing-Room Scrap-Book," which was put into her hands on the decease of L. E. L., English literature was now abandoned for the continuous study of the German. The result on Mr. Howitt's part was the translation of a work written expressly for him, "The Student-Life of Germany," containing the most famous songs and music of the German students. This volume, which was vehemently attacked by some of our own newspapers, nevertheless received from the principal journals of Germany, the highest testimonies of accuracy and mastership of translation, and led to numerous applications on the part of German publishers for translations of works into English, as books for the use of students of English, one only of which, however, Mr. Howitt found time to undertake,—the fanciful story of Peter Schlemm, since published by Schrag of Nürnberg. After three years' abode and observation, Mr. Howitt published his "Social and Rural Life of Germany," which was at once well received here, and reprinted in Germany with the assertion of the "Allgemeine Zeitung," the first critical journal of Germany, of its being the most accurate account of that country ever written by a foreigner.

Perhaps, however, as concerns the English public, the most important consequence of Mr. and Mrs. Howitt's sojourn in Germany is that they had their attention there turned to the languages and literature of the North of Europe. They had the pleasure of becoming intimately acquainted with an excellent and highly-accomplished English family who had spent many years in Sweden, and were enthusiastic lovers of its

literature. With them they immediately commenced the study of Swedish, and were so much charmed with its affinity, both in form and spirit to the English, that they pursued it with great avidity. The first results have been the introduction of the prose tales of *Frederika Bremer*, by Mrs. Howitt, to our knowledge;—a new era in our reading world. These charming works, so distinguished by their natural domestic interest, their faithful delineations, their true spirit of kindliness, poetical feeling, good sense, and domestic harmony and affection, have produced a sensation unequalled as a series since the issue of the *Waverley* novels, and in cheap reprints have been circulated through every class and corner of America. The rapidity with which, from various circumstances, it has been requisite to produce these translations, has, we understand, made it necessary, though appearing as a lady's work entirely in Mrs. Howitt's name, that both Mr. and Mrs. Howitt should latterly unite all their activity in translating, correcting, and passing them through the press.

The Howitts are enthusiastic lovers of their literary pursuits, and anxious to educate their children in the best possible manner, and therefore live a retired and domestic life. Though belonging to the Society of Friends, and attached to its great principles of civil, moral, and religious liberty, they have long ago abandoned its peculiarities; and in manners, dress, and language belong only to the world. For the honour of literature we may safely say, that amongst the many consolatory proofs in modern times of how much literature may contribute to the happiness of life, the case of the Howitts is one of the most striking. The love of literature was the origin of their acquaintance, its pursuit has been the hand-in-hand bond of the most perfect happiness of a long married life; and we may further add, for the honour of womanhood, that while our authoress sends forth her delightful works in unbroken succession, to the four quarters of the globe, William Howitt has been heard to declare that he will challenge any woman, be she who she may, who never wrote a line, to match his good woman in the able management of a large household, at the same time that she fills her own little world of home with the brightness of her own heart and spirit.

DR. PUSEY.

"The angels, in like manner, can utter in a few words singular the things which are written in a volume of any book, and can express such things, or every word, as elevate its meaning to interior wisdom; for their speech is such, that it is consonant with affections, and every word with ideas. Expressions are also varied, by an infinity of methods, according to the series of the things which are in a complex in the thought."—SWEDENBORG, "*Concerning the Wisdom of the Angels of Heaven.*"

IN the vigorous and very ominous contest which has for a considerable time been raging between different sections of the Established Church, it will form no part of this brief notice to engage, on either side. A work like the present cannot, it must be obvious, afford space for lengthy and complex disquisition on any subject; and least of all would its design accord with controversies which are usually, in themselves, endless, whether on matters of religion, science, or politics. A few broad statements of leading principles and facts are all that will be attempted—intended solely for the benefit of those who do not know much of the subject, and have not time to study the "Tracts," but who wish for some concise information.

This necessary avoidance of theological conflicts and the inadmissibility of polemical treatises, must also prevent our taking into the present paper some account of Dr. Chalmers, the leader of the High Church party in the Presbyterian, as Dr. Pusey is in the Episcopal section of the Protestant Church in this kingdom; and must equally prevent any view of the natural opposites of both these leaders in their theological aspects; otherwise our design must have included the lectures of W. J. Fox, and those of the late Dr. Channing, whose transatlantic birth has not precluded his influence among ourselves. Our purpose, however, being limited to the consideration of certain novel doctrines which have been designated after the name of their originator, the following remarks are offered in elucidation.

Dr. Pusey is the representative of that class of Englishmen, who, looking with reprehension and alarm upon the changes in the ecclesiastical and political system of our country which have slowly but constant-

ly gained ground during the lapse of the last fifteen years, have ranged themselves under the freshly emblazoned banners and newly illuminated altars of the Church, have unsheathed the sword of Faith and new interpretation, earnest to restore the ancient constitution in Church and State; to stem the advancing tide of modern opinion and endeavour; to retain the stronghold of the Divine Right of Kings and the Spiritual Supremacy of the Priesthood, and from this detached ground to say to the rising waves, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther," and to the troubled waters, "Peace—be still."

The first note of alarm was sounded to this class when, fifteen years ago, the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Act passed the legislature. This measure (to use the words of a distinguished member of their own body, Mr. Palmer) was, in their eyes, a "cutting away from the Church of England of one of its ancient bulwarks, and evidencing a disposition to make concessions to the clamour of its enemies." In the next year, called by the same authority "the fatal year 1829," they saw the admission of Catholics to posts of trust and responsibility, and to a share in the legislation. The feelings which animated them now, may be understood from the fact that his part in the transaction cost Sir Robert Peel his seat in the University of Oxford, and from the language of the same authority we have already quoted, who described the Emancipation Act as "a measure which scattered to the winds public principle, public morality, public confidence, and dispersed a party, which, had it possessed courage to act according to its old and popular principles, and to act on them with manly energy, would have stemmed the torrent of revolution and averted the awful crisis which was at hand." Such was the state of appalled apprehension on which the tocsin of revolution in France struck like an electric shock in 1830, and on which the echoes reverberated nearer and nearer thunders through the reform agitation in England. "The Tory aristocracy," says Mr. Palmer again, "which had forsaken the Church in yielding Emancipation, were now hurled from their political ascendancy, and the REFORM BILL of 1831—a just retribution for their offence—made for the time the democratic principle all powerful in the state." Events glided on. The claims of the Dissenters were loudly

urged—a severance of Church and State was demanded—ten Irish Bishoprics were suppressed—even Church Rates were in many quarters successfully resisted—and CHURCH REFORM was actually called for, much in the same manner in which Parliamentary Reform had been demanded a year or two before! Struck by these signs of the times, by the increase of dissent, the avowedly low views of church authority entertained by a majority of the clergy and nearly the entire body of the laity, the extreme laxity of discipline and great diversity of doctrine prevailing in the Church, and the tendency to further innovation manifesting itself in many, and those not unimportant quarters, a few clergymen, chiefly residing at Oxford and members of the University, formed themselves into an association under the title of “Friends of the Church.” At the head of these was Dr. Pusey.

Edward Bouverie Pusey is the second son of the late Hon. Philip Pusey, and grandson of the Earl of Radnor. His father assumed the name of Pusey on becoming the possessor of Pusey, in the county of Berks, an estate held by that family from a period considerably anterior to the Norman conquest, and held under a grant from Canute by *cornage*, or the service of a horn. The Pusey horn is well known to antiquaries. Dr. Pusey was born in 1800, and entered the University of Oxford in 1818, as a gentleman commoner of Christ Church. His name appears in the first class in 1822. Shortly afterwards he became a fellow of Oriel College; in 1824 he obtained the prize for the Latin essay, and in 1828 he became Regius Professor of Hebrew and Canon of Christ Church. In this year he married a lady, since deceased. In 1825 he had taken the degree of M.A., and at the usual periods subsequently took those of B.D. and D.D. Dr. Pusey is, therefore, in his 44th year. He is somewhat under the middle size, pale, and of a meditative and intellectual countenance. As a preacher, he is calm, logical and persuasive, and there is an air of sincerity about every word which he utters which is never without its effect. His theological views were at one time supposed to be verging towards those of the German theologians, but they underwent a very decided change before the year 1833, when he became one of the founders of the association, out of which sprang the “Tracts for the Times.”

The first object of this association was to stir up clergy and laity to activity and to more zeal for the office and authority of the Church, and this was done by correspondence, addresses, associations and similar means, with very satisfactory results. But inasmuch as it was by the press that opposite principles had been most successfully inculcated, so the leading members of that society determined to issue some short publications adapted, as they considered, to the exigencies of the times. These publications were not sent forth with any corporate authority. The writers spoke only their own individual opinions, and no system of revision, though often recommended, was ever adopted. The title given to them was "Tracts for the Times, by members of the University of Oxford." Some were addressed especially to the clergy, and headed "*ad clerum*," others to the laity, headed "*ad populum*," others to both.

The tenets maintained by the Tract writers were chiefly as follows. They asserted the three-fold order of ministry, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, as essential to an apostolic church. They claimed a personal, not a merely official, descent from the Apostles, *i. e.*, they declared that not only had the Church ever maintained the three orders, but that an unbroken succession of individuals canonically ordained was enjoyed by the Church and essential to her existence; in short, that without this there could be *no Church at all*. They held the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, of sacramental absolution, and of a real, in contradistinction to a figurative or symbolical, PRESENCE in the Eucharist. They maintained the duty of fasting, of ritual obedience, and of communion with the Apostolic Church, declaring all Dissenters, and, as a necessary consequence, the members of the Church of Scotland, and all churches not episcopal, to be members of no church at all. They denied the validity of Lay-baptism; they threw out hints from time to time, which evidenced an attachment to the theological system supported by the nonjuring divines in the days of James II.; and the grand protestant principle as established by Luther—the right of private interpretation of Holy Scripture—they denied.

A facetious, but somewhat profane Letter, shortly appeared, purporting to be "an Epistle from THE POPE, to certain members of the University of Oxford," and was

extensively circulated. Dr. Pusey replied to this highly reprehensible Pretender, in a grave and earnest tone, deprecating a light and irreligious spirit on a topic of so great magnitude and importance.

The Evangelical party in the Church next objected to certain expressions used in the "Tracts," such as "conveying the sacrifice to the people"—"entrusted with the keys of Heaven and Hell"—"entrusted with the awful and mysterious *gift of making the bread and wine, Christ's body and blood*"—all which expressions they considered might perhaps be understood in *rather* a Romanizing way. "The Record," a religious newspaper, conducted by gentlemen of Presbyterian tenets, but circulating chiefly among churchmen of Calvinistic doctrine, directly accused the Tract writers as Jesuits, and covert Papists. The conduct of the Bishops, who who were supposed to favour Dr. Pusey, was watched, their dinner-parties noted, and the disposal of their patronage tartly commented on. The inferior clergy were subjected to espionage. If a priest or deacon was seen at a ball or concert, his name was sure to appear in the next week's "Record" as a musical or a dancing clergyman, and a Puseyite; for the term "*Puseyite*" originated with this journal. The Tracts meanwhile went steadily on, never replying nor recriminating, but continuing to put forth new and more startling deviations from the received theology of the day.

In 1836, a new species of hostility commenced, in which the Puseyite party were the assailant. Dr. Hampden, canon of Christ Church, and Principal of St. Mary Hall, was appointed Regius Professor of Divinity. The admirable personal qualities, and the splendid abilities of Dr. Hampden, made *the man* both admired and esteemed; but he had preached a course of Bampton Lectures which were considered "rationalistic"—or tending to a daring use of the rational faculty, and had published a pamphlet; in which, says Mr. Palmer, "the boldest latitudinarianism was openly avowed, and Socinians were placed on a level with all other Christians!" His appointment was therefore vigorously opposed by the high Church party; but the opposition being fruitless, an agitation was commenced chiefly by the Tract writers, and a formal censure of the University on Dr. Hampden was passed by an overwhelming majority in Convocation. By this censure, the Margaret Professor of Divinity was substituted for the Regius

Professor, and the attendance of the under graduates on the latter, dispensed with.

Periodicals were now started with the avowed object of opposing the "Tracts;" and one, "The Church of England Quarterly Review," was alluded to in the House of Commons, and had two articles, which were marked by vehement invective, quoted in "The Times." That paper, however, subsequently discovering certain inaccuracies, repudiated the articles in question. Thus attacked, the Oxford party resolved to have an organ of their own; and the "British Critic" being at that moment thrown into the market, Dr. Pusey became the purchaser, and placed in the post of editor, Mr. Newman, the most learned, the most astute, and the most practised in controversy of all concerned in the tracts. At the same time, Professor Sewell took up their cause in the Quarterly Review.

The singular book called "Froude's Remains," edited by Mr. Newman, has been excused by moderate writers as having been the result of prolonged bad health; but as its editor gravely answered in print, that "Mr. Froude was not a man who said anything at random," the supposition, one would think, can scarcely be justified. The author, among many other similar expressions, spoke of himself and his coadjutors as organizing "a conspiracy for the *unprotestantizing* of the Church:"—he called the Reformation "A limb badly set, which required to be broken again;" and wondered that " * * * did not get on faster to hate the reformers."

The first learned opposition which the Tractarians had to encounter was in the work of Dr. Mc Ilvaine, Bishop of Vermont, in America. In the same year, 1840, the "Church of England Quarterly" passed into other management, and maintained a firm, consistent opposition to the same writers, uniformly, however, treating them as gentlemen, scholars, and Christians. In April, 1843, it was, however, again placed under its former conductors.

Meanwhile the Tracts themselves had been silenced, the Bishop of Oxford having recommended their cessation, and been promptly obeyed. The last of the series, the celebrated No. 90,* which was avowed by Mr. Newman, was pointedly condemned by many of the Bishops, and a note of censure passed on it by the

* The tract called "One Tract More," printed subsequently to No. 90, was written by a well-known poet, and M.P.

Hebdomadal Board. Books, sermons, reviews, charges, memoirs from the Puseyite party, have since manifested their determination to continue to be heard through the press.

The excitement was increased by the charge of the Bishop of London in 1842, in which he touched on some points of ritual observance, apparently favouring the Puseyites. A professor of poetry, who never published a single poetical work, has been elected at Oxford, "because he was not a Puseyite." Mr. Gladstone's two works, "On the Relation of the Church to the State," and "Church Principles," were attacked as Puseyite, and Mr. Christmas's treatise on the "Discipline of the Anglican Church," though touching on no disputed point of doctrine, afforded matter of criticism for six weeks to a Presbyterian journal on the same ground. Old Divinity was now remembered with affection. Societies for the publication of neglected old divinity have been established, and also, rival societies of Anglo-Catholic theology. As a good influence, may be noticed the impulse to correct Gothic Architecture, to the employment of art in the embellishment of churches, and the improvement of the musical part of the service. As evidences of dissension, we observe, one rector advertising for a curate, with—"No Puseyite need apply;"—another, "No Oxford man will be accepted;" on the other hand, a vicar "wants an assistant of sound Anglican views, who is untainted with Erastianism, and entertains no objection to the daily service, the weekly offertory, and to preaching in a surplice!" Thus, are the very bowels of Mother Church inflamed and convulsed.

The last public act of Dr. Pusey was the delivery of a sermon before the University, in which he was accused of advancing the doctrine of transubstantiation. Judges appointed by the University have censured him; passed a sentence of suspension on him, and condemned the sermon as heretical: but his friends maintain, that by not specifying their grounds, the judges have laid themselves open to the charges of unfairness and severity. It is much to be feared that these doings closely resemble many things which may be discovered as far back as the times of Abailard and St. Bernard.

It is said that Dr. Pusey is about to quit Oxford, and to take up his residence at Leeds, where a superb church is in process of erection for his ministry.

G. P. R. JAMES, MRS. GORE, CAPTAIN MARRYATT, AND MRS. TROLLOPE.

"And what of this new book, that the whole world make such a rout about?"
—STERNE.

"How delightful! To cut open the leaves, to inhale the fragrance of the scarcely-dry paper, to examine the type, to see who is the printer, to launch out into regions of thought and invention, (never trod till now,) and to explore characters, (that never met a human eye before,) this is a luxury worth sacrificing a dinner-party, or a few hours of a spare morning to. If we cannot write ourselves, we become by busying ourselves about it, a kind of accessaries after the fact."—HAZLITT.

"No sooner did the Housekeeper see them than she ran out of the room in great haste, and immediately returned with a pot of holy water and a bunch of hyssop, and said, 'Signor Licentiate, take this and sprinkle the room, lest some enchanter, of the many these books abound with, should enchant us, in revenge for what we intend to do in banishing them out of the world!' The Priest smiled at the Housekeeper's simplicity, and ordered the Barber to reach him the books, one by one, that they might see what they treated of; for, perhaps they might find some that did not deserve to be chastised by fire."—DON QUIXOTE.

PROSE fiction has acquired a more respectable status within the last half century than it held at any previous period in English literature. Very grave people, who set up to be thought wiser than their neighbours, are no longer ashamed to be caught reading a novel. The reason of this is plain enough. It is not that your conventional reader has abated a jot of his dignity, or relaxed a single prejudice in favour of "light reading," but that the novel itself has undergone a complete revolution. It is no longer a mere fantasy of the imagination, a dreamy pageant of unintelligible sentiments and impossible incidents; but a sensible book, insinuating in an exceedingly agreeable form—just as cunning physicians insinuate nauseous drugs in sweet disguises—a great deal of useful knowledge, historical, social, and moral. Most people are too lazy to go to the spring-head, and are well content to drink from any of the numerous little rills that happen to ripple close at hand; and thus, by degrees, the whole surface becomes fertilized after a fashion, and by a remarkably easy and unconscious process. Formerly, a novel was a laborious pretext for saying a wonderful variety of fine silly things: now, it is really a channel for conveying actual information, the

direct result of observation and research, put together with more or less artistic ingenuity, but always keeping in view the responsibility due to the living humanity from which it professes to be drawn. Genteel amenities and pathetic bombast are gone out; and even the most exquisite universalities of the old school have been long since shot with the immense mass of rubbish under which they were buried. Crebillon himself slumbers in the dust of the well-stocked library, while there is no end to the new editions of Scott.

This elevation of prose fiction to a higher rank, and the extension of the sphere of its popularity, may be at once referred to the practical nature of the materials with which it deals, and the sagacity with which they are selected and employed. What Aristotle says of poetry in general may be applied with peculiar force to this particular form of narrative—that it is more philosophical than history; for while the latter is engaged with literal details of particular facts, which often outrage general probability and never illustrate general principles, the former generalizes throughout, and by tracing in natural sequence a course of causes and effects which would, in all probability, have succeeded each other in the same order, under similar circumstances, in real life, it exhibits a more comprehensive picture of human nature, and conducts us upon the whole to a profounder moral. If the flippant observation be true, that History is Philosophy teaching by example, then it must be admitted that she sometimes teaches by very bad examples; but when she condescends to teach through the medium of fiction, she certainly has no excuse for not selecting the best.

The attempt to establish a sort of junction between history and romance—the *Amandas* and the *Marguerites* of Valois, the half-fabulous *Rolands* and the veritable *Richards*—was a lucky conception. We have not the least notion to whom the honour of having originated the historical novel fairly belongs. Certainly not to Scott, to whom it is so commonly attributed. Miss Lee was beforehand with him, and Miss Porter, and twenty others—to say nothing of De Foe, who seems to have given a broad hint of the practicability of such a project in two or three of his inimitable fact-fiction memoirs. We suspect that the idea of the historical novel grew up slowly, that nobody had the courage to make so free with history all at once, and that it became developed at

last only by the sheer necessity of devising something new, consequent upon the exhaustion of every existing mode of fiction. The germ of this brave conception, if we were disposed to pursue the enquiry in a learned spirit, might, perhaps, be found in the *Ethiopics* of Heliodorus, which dates so far back as the fourth century, and which is in some sort historical, since it presents an accurate and curious picture of the customs of ancient Egypt.* But we have no occasion to travel into such remote paths of investigation. With Froissart and Monstrelet before us, the "Helden Buch," the "Nibelungen Lied," the "Chronicles of the Cid," and the old Spanish and French romances, we can be at no loss to discover how the historical novel gradually put forth its strength and enlarged its stature, until in course of time it grew to its present height and importance. The poetical spirit in which the chronicle writers treat the best established historical reputations, the atmosphere of imagination they throw round the most ordinary facts, and the skill with which they relate their narratives, mingling the dramatic *tact* of the *raconteur* with the sobriety of the historian, may be regarded as having accomplished the first grand advance towards the disputed boundary. The subsequent progress was easy enough; nor can it be a matter of much surprise, when once the invasion was fairly effected, to find the two hitherto distinct races mixed and confounded together on the frontier of the two hitherto hostile territories. If there be romance writers who have taken upon themselves the functions of history, it cannot be denied, on the other hand, that there are historians who have not hesitated to appear in the masquerade of romance.

Of all historical novelists, Scott justly occupies the first place. If he did not create that kind of composition, he was the first who brought it into general favour. The secret was no sooner unfolded, by which the annals of nations could thus be rendered tributary to the most fascinating shapes of romance, than hundreds of imitators started up. Everybody thought he could write an historical novel, and accordingly there was not a nook or corner of history that was not ransacked for materi-

* The "Cyropædia" of Xenophon has a still earlier claim; but either of these derivations makes the historical fiction coincident with the origin of prose romance. Madame de Genlis, in her "Memoires," claims precedence of Scott, who she says was her imitator.—ED.

als. Nor was this excitement confined merely to England. It rapidly spread over every part of the civilized world, and seized upon every language that had a printing-press to give utterance to its inspirations. Even bleak and uncultivated Norway is warmed into enthusiasm by the genius of Ingemann, and Russia herself, whose national literature is scarcely half a century old, boasts of her own especial Walter Scott, with some dozens of followers trooping at his heels.

It is not too much to say that the most successful of those who have trodden the same track in England, is G. P. R. James.* There is no writer, of his particular class, now living, so familiar to the public at large; not one who has drawn so extensively upon sources not always accessible to the readers of novels; not one who has laboured with such unremitting diligence, and such uniform popularity. If he has never greatly succeeded, we know no instance in which he has greatly failed.

The voluminousness—we choose the word advisedly for the occasion—of Mr. James's writings is the idea instantly suggested to the mind upon the bare mention of his name. The first thing you think of is the enormous quantity of books he has written. You fancy a man seated at a table in the centre of a commodious library, with the gift of perpetual motion in his wrist, as incapable of fatigue in brains or fingers as the steam-apparatus that hatches eggs, and possessed with a terrible determination of blood to the head—relieving itself instinctively by a fearful resolution to write on—on—on—during *secula seculorum*, at all hazards to gods, men and columns, “till the great globe itself,” &c. Fifty other strange notions of a like bewildering kind rise up and surround this image of an inexhaustible author; and the more you attempt to close with the phenomenon, the more incomprehensible it becomes, like a dim perplexing figure in a dream.

We have not the means of verifying the number of Mr. James's publications, nor the period within which they were produced. But, we believe, we are sufficiently accurate for general purposes in saying that he commenced his career about fifteen years ago, and that from that time to the present, he has published nearly two

* Mr. James may be, numerically, the most popular of all the historical romancists, but we are far from considering him as the equal of the author of “Rienzi” and the “Last Days of Pompeii.”—ED.

novels, or histories, annually. In a catalogue of works pirated from English authors by Baudry of Paris, dated 1841, we find no less than twenty-one substantial three-volumed novels by Mr. James, which the worthy smuggler, having no duty to pay for copy-right, is enabled to offer to the travelling English, and the travelled French, at the small charge of five francs each work. Mr. James has suffered heavily by this nefarious system of literary plunder; and to his incessant exertions for the protection of English copy-rights we are mainly indebted for the small amount of security we now enjoy through the vigilance of the custom-house officers. All that can be done in the absence of a law of international copy-right, is to prevent the importation of these swindling editions; and this, we believe, is now done as carefully as such an office can be expected to be fulfilled by the class of persons to whom it is unavoidably entrusted.

The French catalogue to which we have referred, is of course a very imperfect guide to Mr. James's complete works; but it will help the imagination a little on the way. In addition to all these novels, there are yet to be piled up histories and biographies of every class and kind, so that by the time we shall have arrived at the top of the heap, we shall be well disposed to stop and vent our wonder in one long heave of respiration. If all these works were gathered together, and a scrivener employed to copy them, it would probably occupy him a longer period of fair average daily labour in the simple task of transcription than the author expended upon their composition. To those who know how much more rapidly the invention works than the hands—how immeasurably the brain outstrips the mechanical process of the pen—this assertion will neither be new nor surprising. Yet still there remains behind this problem,—how Mr. James, although he might compose faster than another person could copy, contrived both to compose and write so much within so short a period? But the problem is set at rest by the fact that Mr. James did not *write* any of his works. Like Cobbett, he employs an amanuensis, and all this long and brilliant array of historical narratives with which the public have been so pleasantly entertained for such a series of years have been dictated by the author, while he was walking up and down his study, one after another, or, sometimes, possibly, two or three at a time!

The usages of authors are proverbially capricious. Cuvier, says "Punch," (and "Punch" is as good an authority in such matters as Bayle or Johnson,) used to dip his head and feet into cold water while he was preparing his great work, the "Règne Animal !" There is no reason on earth why Mr. James should not dictate his novels, if the habit suits and pleases him. But to one who is not in the habit of dictating novels, the process seems peculiarly unfavourable to the due attainment of the end proposed. One can understand Cobbett's dictation—its uses and abuses. The dashing articles of the "Register" are distinguished by the heedless energy and volubility of *impromptu*. It is the very style adapted for quick popular effects—to be read on the sudden, and set the head whirling, and the hand aching for a petition to sign, or a second Peterloo ; just the sort of headlong accumulation of facts and accusations a popular leader, who thoroughly understood the elements he had to wield, and who possessed a genius capable of moulding them to his purpose, might pour out with the greatest imaginable triumph. All this is intelligible enough ; but the application of the same method of composition to the machinery and conduct of a narrative romance is inexplicable. The necessity of carrying on the plot by constant references to past scenes, of anticipating events in some cases, and preparing for them in all ; and of working up carefully and by reiterated touches in dialogue and action, the delicate and shifting traits of character, so as to preserve the consistency and dramatic integrity of the general design ; these necessities, and many more which might be easily pointed out in the structure of a well-considered novel, would seem to render it nearly impossible to deliver orally three volumes of such matter, so connected and continuous, so reticulated and arranged, so true to life, so varied, and so artistical, in form, movement, and treatment. It is almost impossible to imagine any man *speaking* a novel. Yet Mr. James constantly performs this curious feat—more curious to our apprehension a hundred times than if he were to write his novels in his sleep.

One obvious advantage of this improvisation is, that it has enabled the author to carry on his labours with that marvellous celerity to which we are indebted for the amazing quantity. It is not likely that he could have produced so much in so short a period, had he been

held in check by the slower process of pen and ink, with all its provoking suggestiveness, its eye-traps at every turn of a sentence, its awkward gaps, and hitches, and flaws of style, to the mending of which thought and spirit are so frequently sacrificed. On the other hand, it may be reasonably doubted whether what might have been thus lost in quantity might not have been gained in quality. If he had written less he would have written better—there would have been more ultimate purpose in his writings, more condensation, vigour, and vitality.

We are very far from thinking that quantity is an argument, *a priori*, against the originality or strength of genius. It is a common notion to suppose that he who writes a great deal must necessarily dilute and weaken his resources ; that writing upon a variety of subjects, it is impossible to write well upon any. This is a vulgar error of the most ignorant kind. He who can write well upon only one subject, or whose capacity cannot accomplish more than a little upon any, is not very likely to be mistaken by the world for a genius. The greatness of the intellect consists as much in its fullness as its profundity. The most remarkable authors in all ages have been amongst the most prolific—instance, Chaucer, Voltaire, Dryden, Swift, Lope de Vega, Goethe, Scott, &c. But there is no universal *dictum* on the subject ; each case must be determined finally by the character of the productions themselves. Copiousness without power is mere mental imbecility—drivelling upon paper.

It is not entirely, therefore, because Mr. James has written so much, that we think he might have done better had he written less. The manner of composition has had something to do with it, and is mainly answerable for that uniformity of style, that smooth onward flat over which the narrative rolls with such regularity, and that want of compactness in details, which, with all our admiration of the versatile talents of the author, we constantly feel in these very clever and very numerous novels. If he had not drawn so extensively upon history, and availed himself so largely of characters whose lineaments were already familiar to the reader, these deficiencies would have been still more apparent. But, fortunately, the reader is enabled by his previous knowledge to fill up many of the faint and hasty outlines of

the author, an involuntary process which frequently atones for the short-comings of the fiction.

The "fatal facility" of these novels must be apparent to the most superficial critic. It is impossible not to see that they have been hurried out pell-mell, with wonderful self-reliance and an almost constitutional contempt of system and responsibility. The fluency of the manner is not more palpable than the diffusiveness of the matter. The figures are in eternal motion; the dialogue seems everlasting; the descriptions have the breadth and incoherency and joyous flush of a stage diorama. The flurry of the incidents, the number of the characters, and the mass of subordinate details that stifle the main action, leave upon the memory a very confused sense of the particular merits or final aim of the story. Looking back upon the whole series, one is apt, from the homogeneity, or family-likeness, which pervades them, to mistake one for another, to run Darnley into Richelieu, or jumble up De L'Orme with De Leon. This indistinctness arises from want of care and reflection in the preliminary settlement of a definite design. The novel seems to be begun and finished at a single heat, while the first thought was still fresh, and before time had been allowed to examine its capabilities, or shape it to an end. The consequences of this indiscretion rise up in judgment against the author in every page. There is no repose in the action, the portraiture, the embroidery, the scenery, to give leisure for the reader to take in the vital elements of the subject, or for the prominent personages to grow out into their full and natural proportions, and fix themselves calmly, but forcibly, upon his attention.

Novels written upon this plan, or rather absence of plan, may be, as they are, admirable novels of costume; they may even lay claim to the higher distinction of being capital illuminations, worthy of being let into the margin of history; but they must not be confounded with that class of historical or real-life novels in which all other considerations are subservient to the delineation of human nature.

Fortunately these faults are not of a kind to mar very materially the pleasure of the bulk of novel-readers; who, moreover, find too many sources of rational enjoyment in Mr. James's books not to be ready to compound.

all their sins of execution for their research and good sense—qualities so very rare in modern fictions.

The historical research evinced in them is very considerable; much more varied and extensive than the author is ever likely to get credit for from the multitude. People are apt to take history in this shape for granted, without troubling themselves to look beyond the page before them for any further satisfaction of their curiosity. But if they were to follow out the suggestions of the narrative, to read up to the point of interest selected by the author, and to render themselves familiar with the life of the period, so as to be able to grasp it in all its aspects, they would begin to perceive that the works which they had been accustomed to regard merely as pleasant pastime, are frequently the fruits of severe investigation. The historical novelist must know a great deal more than he can exhibit in his novels; he must have laid all the adjacent fields of enquiry under tribute, and mastered many details lying outside the topic, time, and country, he has chosen for his canvass. He cannot *cram* for the occasion. His collateral studies are as indispensable to his purpose as side-lights to the stage where the action would proceed in comparative darkness without them, although they are themselves always kept out of sight.

In this respect Mr. James's novels are entitled to high commendation. They embrace a wide scope of reading, including nearly all ages and countries. Mr. James, indeed, seems to have an especial genius for this discursive style of historical literature, and ranges with equal ease through the camp of Attila and the salons of Louis Quatorze. In French history he is particularly at home; and the whole vocabulary of chivalry is at his fingers' ends. To say that he has not sometimes adapted history to his own ends, would be to claim for him a merit he would scarcely set up for himself; but it may be safely asserted that of all historical novelists he is, beyond comparison, the most faithful and conscientious. He rarely exceeds the fair license of idealizing his materials; he seldom makes his prominent historical personages responsible for public acts which he cannot verify by authorities; and he always presents them in as strict keeping with their admitted lineaments and characteristics, as can reasonably be expected under the new circumstances in which he finds it necessary

to place them. For this reason we prefer his professed fictions to his professed biographies. They are closer to the mark of real life. They bring out the portrait more distinctly, surrounded by accessories that assist us to a more intimate view of its features. The habit of writing fiction has given a dangerous freedom to his manner of dealing with facts, which communicates its influence, more or less, to his purely historical labours. He works up a history in the picturesque spirit of a romance; and, although it is to the full as trustworthy as many much duller works, one cannot help being struck by its deficiencies in closeness of texture and weight of style.

On the other hand, there seems to be no limit to his ingenuity, his faculty of getting up scenes and incidents, dilemmas, artifices, *contre temps*, battles, skirmishes, disguises, escapes, trials, combats, adventures. He accumulates names, dresses, implements of war and peace, official retinues, and the whole paraphernalia of customs and costumes with astounding alacrity. He appears to have exhausted every imaginable "situation," and to have described every available article of attire on record. What he must have passed through—what triumphs he must have enjoyed—what exigencies he must have experienced—what love he must have suffered—what a grand wardrobe his brain must be! He has made some poetical and dramatic efforts; but this irresistible tendency to pile up circumstantial particulars is fatal to those forms of art which demand intensity of passion. In stately narratives of chivalry and feudal grandeur, precision and reiteration are desirable rather than injurious—as we would have the most perfect accuracy and finish in a picture of ceremonials; and here Mr. James is supreme. One of his court romances is a book of brave sights and heraldic magnificence—it is the next thing to moving at our leisure through some superb and august procession.

All his works, without distinction, are pervaded by moral feeling. There is a soul of true goodness in them—no maudlin affectation of virtue, but a manly rectitude of aim which they derive direct from the heart of the writer. His enthusiastic nature is visibly impressed upon his productions. They are full of his own frank and generous impulses—impulses so honourable to him in private life. Out of his books, there is no man more

sincerely beloved. Had he not even been a distinguished author, his active sympathy in the cause of letters would have secured to him the attachment and respect of his contemporaries.

If we had prescribed to ourselves in this desultory criticism anything like a distinct plan, we should be terribly puzzled to assign a satisfactory reason for turning from Mr. James to Mrs. Gore. They are neither so like nor unlike as that one should be suggestive of the other. But we have no plan at all—beyond that of illustrating two or three popular phases of our prose fiction through two or three of its master-spirits; and the name of Mrs. Gore occurs to us as one of the most conspicuous. Within the last eight or nine years she has distanced nearly all her contemporaries by a rapid succession of some of the most brilliant novels in our language.

The only element we can discover in common between Mr. James and Mrs. Gore, is that marvellous capacity of production by which they are both so well known in the circulating libraries. Wherever you see a board hung out at the door of a provincial or suburban library, containing a list of the last batch of new books, you may be quite certain of finding Mrs. Gore and Mr. James prodigiously distinguished at the head of it in Brobdignagian letters. They are the Penates of the subscription shops. Their "last" is ever fresh and never wanting—when the season sets in, they set in, and as punctually as the booksellers' circular is published, they are published. Whatever irregularities may mark the appearances of Bulwer, or Horace Smith, or Morier, none are perceptible in their appearances. The dead months of the year alone intervene—they are as sure to come out with the earliest spring and winter advertisements, as the scribe of the mysterious "Evening paper" is sure, by some inexplicable means, to anticipate the merits of every one of Mr. Colburn's new publications.

But accustomed as the public are to this constant and undeviating fertility, they can form, nevertheless, only an imperfect notion of the surprising industry of Mrs. Gore. Apprehensive of risking her well-earned popularity by taxing the indulgence of her admirers too heavily, or, perhaps, of bringing herself within the lash of the old saw, that easy writing is not always the easi-

est reading, she has given many of her productions to the world anonymously. Many and many a time has some innocent country squire pondered over a new novel with most critical delight, and prophesied a famous literary destiny for its unknown author, little suspecting that it sprang from the well-known "Roman hand" to which he was indebted for a similar pleasure only a week or two before. Publishers have been sometimes compelled to run a race for priority in bringing out her works; so that it has happened that two of her novels, appearing in the same week, have been actually made to oppose each other in the market. Profound must be the arts of the bibliopolic craft by which a woman can thus be turned into her own rival.

In addition to these original productions, acknowledged and unacknowledged, including all sorts of contributions to periodicals, Mrs. Gore has executed some translations from the French, and given several small dramas to the stage; such as the "Maid of Croissy," "The Tale of a Tub," "The Sledge-Driver," &c., all founded upon, if not taken from, French originals. She has also written a comedy called "The School for Coquettes," and others; but they will scarcely increase her reputation. So fluent and spontaneous a writer was not likely to restrain herself within dramatic forms, without losing much of her natural spirit; and she is still less likely ever to subdue her teeming eloquence down to the brevity of expression so essential to what may be properly called dramatic language. She might conceive a comedy admirably in three volumes, but it is nearly impossible she could write one in five acts.

It is well known in the literary circles that Mrs. Gore is the author of that clever, but surpassingly impudent book, "Cecil." We believe she has never avowed it, and has rather, on the contrary, kept up a little mystification about it. But there is really no doubt on the subject. She wrote the story, and Mr. Beckford helped her to the learning. The public have been often perplexed by Mrs. Gore's Greek and Latin, which, although they were never paraded so impertinently as the polyglott pretensions of Lady Morgan, were still remote enough from the ordinary course of female accomplishments to startle the public. Where they came from on former occasions we know not; but in this instance they may be referred to Mr. Beckford, together with the

still more recondite scraps of far-off tongues that are scattered through the work.

"Cecil" is a perfect representation of the worst, but certainly the most dazzling aspect of Mrs. Gore's genius. It abounds in flashy, high-mettled fashionable slang, and is thrown off in such a vein of upsetting egotism, with such a shew of universal knowledge, and in a style of such dashing effrontery, that it carries the multitude fairly off their legs. There never was a novel written at such a slapping pace. The fearlessness of the execution diverts attention from its deficiencies as a work of art, and helps in a great degree to conceal the real poverty of the conception. But books of this class will not endure the test of re-perusal. Their shallowness becomes palpable at the second reading, even to those who have not sufficient discernment to detect it at once.

As there is nothing so intolerable as dulness, so there is nothing so attractive as vivacity. And this is the predominant quality which has ensured the success of "Cecil." The unflagging gaiety by which the story is lighted up, puts the reader into the best possible humour with himself and the author. When this temper of mutual good-will is attained by any means, the result is safe. But critics must not suffer their judgment to be taken by storm in this way. They must look a little below the surface, and satisfy themselves as to the congruity of the fable, the truthfulness of the characters, and the general bearing of the whole design. To subject the motley "Cecil" to such an ordeal would be an act of great cruelty. It would be the breaking of a very charming butterfly on a wheel of torture. The plot is frequently absurd and sometimes improbable--the prominent figures are at best clever exaggerations of an artificial state of society--and the moral, if that be the right name for the final impression it leaves upon the mind, is an unprofitable exposition of selfishness and sensuality, and of aristocratic talents steeped to rottenness in the most debasing vices. The second series was an attempt to redeem "Cecil," but, like most second series, the experiment was felt on all hands to be a failure.

We have referred to "Cecil" for the purpose of getting rid at once of all our objections to Mrs. Gore as a novelist. Wherever she has elsewhere missed a

complete triumph, it has generally arisen from the intrusion of this same spirit of coxcombrv. As a painter of society, possessing knowledge of human nature, she leaves the Richardsons and Brookes far behind. The elasticity of her manner is perfectly unrivalled. If she rarely reaches the quiet humour of Madame D'Arblay, and never realizes the Dutch fidelity of Miss Austen, she preserves, upon the whole, a more sustained flight than either.* Although nearly all her novels belong to the same *genus*, and are minted off with nearly the same pattern, they do not fatigue or disappoint the reader. Their buoyancy imparts to them a perpetual youth.

Mrs. Gore's views of English society are not always founded on actual observation. Sometimes, out of sheer impatience of time and thought, she drops into the old traditions of fashionable life, as they have descended to us in the plays and novels of the last century, making her lords and ladies move about like persons in a masquerade who have come to play allegorical characters and shew off their finery, instead of being engaged in the *bona fide* business of life. Yet she presents this false picture with so much tact and adroitness, and colours it so superbly, that, with all our consciousness of its unreality, we feel it to be irresistibly amusing. Genius alone can thus invest shadows with interest; and there is a felicity in Mrs. Gore's genius which gives piquancy and effect to everything she touches. When she sets herself in earnest to sketch the aristocracy, she shews how little necessity she has for reflecting in her faithful pages artificial modes that have been long since extinct, or cobweb refinements that never existed. She never succeeds so well as in that class of experiences which come within her own immediate observation. Her gentry are capital. She excels in the portraiture of the upper section of the middle class, just at the point of contact with the nobility, where their own distinguishing traits are modified by the peculiarities of their social position. The firmness and subtlety with which she traces them through all their relations, political and domestic; the almost masculine energy she throws into her vivid details of party

* We hardly feel at ease in the above classification of Richardson with the author of the "Fool of Quality." We also think that Miss Austen preserves a very sustained flight; it may be near the ground, but she never flags in a feather.—Ed.

intrigue, from the public contentions in parliament to the secret conspiracies of the club and the boudoir; and the consummate sagacity she displays in unveiling to its very household recesses the interior life that pants under all this external tumult, wrong-headed and hollow-hearted, proud, sensitive and irritable—are solid qualities upon which she may safely repose for the verdict of posterity.

Her *parvenues* are quite equal in their way to any examples of the kind in our language, without being degraded by superfluous grossness, or farcical expedients. They are not labelled like fools and jesters, but made to work out their ends by their own lusty vanities, and by the unsuspecting sincerity with which they eternally strive against the grain of their unfitness. She lets their humanity rise superior to the humour she raises at their expense, and sometimes even flings a tinge of sadness over their hopeless exclusion from the circles to which they aspire. She does not hesitate to exhibit them, on occasion, like the poor Peri crouched at the gate of Paradise with the opal light falling through a chink on her folded wings. She is not unmindful of the pathetic truth that wells up to the surface of all misdirected efforts and false enthusiasm, even through the most ludicrous association of ideas. It is this truth which makes "Don Quixote," to those who perceive its true meaning, one of the most profoundly melancholy books in the world.

If we wanted a complete contrast to Mrs. Gore, we have it at hand in Mrs. Trollope. The class to which she belongs is, fortunately, very small; but it will always be recruited from the ranks of the unscrupulous, so long as a corrupt taste is likely to yield a trifling profit. She owes everything to that audacious contempt of public opinion, which is the distinguishing mark of persons who are said to *stick at nothing*. Nothing but this sticking at nothing could have produced some of the books she has written, in which her wonderful impunity of face is so remarkable. Her constitutional coarseness is the natural element of a low popularity, and is sure to pass for cleverness, shrewdness, and strength, where cultivated judgment and chaste inspiration would be thrown away.* Her books of travel

* Still, we submit that the critic does not admit enough on the other side.

are crowded with plebeian criticisms on works of art and the usages of courts, and are doubtless held in great esteem by her admirers, who love to see such things overhauled and dragged down to their own level. The book on America is of a different class. The subject exactly suited her style and her taste, and people looked on at the fun as they would at a scramble of sweeps in the kennel; while the reflecting few thought it a little unfair in Mrs. Trollope to find fault with the manners of the Americans. Happy for her she had such a topic to begin with. Had she commenced her literary career with Austria or France, in all likelihood, she would have ended it there.

But it is to her novels she is chiefly indebted for her current reputation; and it is here her defects are most glaringly exhibited. She cannot adapt herself to the characterization requisite in a work of fiction: she cannot go out of herself: she serves up everything with the same sauce: the predominant flavour is Trollope still. The plot is always preposterous, and the actors in it seem to be eternally bullying each other. She takes a strange delight in the hideous and revolting, and dwells with gusto upon the sins of vulgarity. Her sensitiveness upon this point is striking. She never omits an opportunity of detailing the faults of low-bred people, and even goes out of her way to fasten the stigma upon others who ought to have been more gently tasselled. Then her low people are sunk deeper than the lowest depths, as if they had been bred in and in, to the last dregs. Nothing can exceed the vulgarity of Mrs. Trollope's mob of characters, except the vulgarity of her select aristocracy. That is transcendent—it caps the climax.

We have heard it urged on behalf of Mrs. Trollope, that her novels are, at all events, drawn from life. So are sign-paintings. It is no great proof of their truth that centaurs and griffins do not run loose through her pages, and that her men and women have neither hoofs nor tails. The tawdriest wax-works, girt up in paste and spangles, are also “drawn from life;” but there ends the resemblance.

Foremost amongst the novelists who really do “draw from life,” is Captain Marryatt. Were it necessary to

seek any excuse for occasional blemishes in his tales, the best that could be found is, that they are, more or less, indigenous to the soil he turns up. The life-like earnestness of his sketches may generally be urged with confidence in vindication of any faults which may be detected in them by prudish or captious readers. Captain Marryatt is the antipodes of a fine writer. His English is always rough-cast, and his style frequently crude and slovenly. But this negligence of forms only heightens the substantial interest of the matter. He tells a story like one who has his heart in it, and who is indifferent to everything but his facts. The veracity of his fictions, if we may use the expression, constitutes their permanent charm.

Few novelists have ever more distinctly shown, that the secret of success in works of this description is close adherence to nature. There are no dramatic perplexities in his books, no fluent descriptions, no turgid appeals to the imagination: his narratives are simple and progressive; he never uses a word more than he actually wants; and the class from which he generally selects his characters, cannot certainly be considered very attractive to the public at large. Yet his novels are read with breathless curiosity in the most refined circles, as well as in those to whose sympathies they are more directly addressed. By what means does he so successfully attain this result? By fidelity to the nature he professes to delineate. There is literally nothing else in his books to fascinate attention. But, then, this "like Aaron's serpent swallows up the rest."

Coincident with his inherent truthfulness is the total absence of egotism and affectation. You never feel the author looking in upon you through the curtains of the story to see how you like him. There is no personal idiosyncrasy thrust upon you; no literary vanity suspending the action to let the author survey himself in the glass; the story predominates to the entire exclusion of the authorship, and might have been written by A. B. or C., as well as by Marryatt, for all the reader has any reason to know.

It is the "one touch of nature," that makes people who are technically ignorant of ships and seamen, and of the seaward life, articulated so correctly in Captain Marryatt's books, feel so strong an interest in the fortunes of his heroes. Their individuality rises up palpa-

bly under his hands. The vicissitudes through which they pass may be new and foreign, but their humanity is intelligible and familiar. His characters, whatever may be their rank, are appropriate to the place and business in which they are engaged; they are acting precisely as you would expect such men to act in such circumstances; they are surrounded by the essentials of their condition; and a practical property and consistency, the perfection of art in its kind, invariably presides over their language and conduct. You become gradually intimate with them, and are affected at last by a pure sympathy in their way of life; and thus a race, peculiar in itself, and remote from the daily intercourse of the world, is made to reach and agitate the universal heart.

Of course we do not apply this description indiscriminately to all Captain Marryatt's productions. It must be taken with exceptions; as all criticisms must, that aim at nothing more than to exhibit salient characteristics.

THOMAS NOON TALFOURD.

"A Serjeant of the Lawe, ware and wise,
That often hadde yben at the paruis.
There was also, full riche of excellence.
Discrete he was, and of gret reverence ;
He seemed swiche, his wordes were so wise."—CHAUCER.]

"And give me stomach to digest this Law,
O sacred Poesy, the queen of souls !
Would men learn but to distinguish spirits,
And set true difference 'twixt those jaded wits
That run a broken pace for common hire,
And the high raptures of a happy muse !—

* * * * *

Hence, Law, and welcome, Muses ! tho' not rich
Yet are you pleasing : let's be reconciled !"—BEN JONSON.

It falls to the lot of very few men to attain to eminence in many and various paths. The subject of the present essay, celebrated as an able, accomplished, and conscientious lawyer, an acute critic of independent judgment and generous feelings, an eloquent orator, a consistent legislator, and a dramatic poet, is one of these few who have so signalized themselves.

Thomas Noon Talfourd is a native of Reading. His mother was the daughter of Mr. Thomas Noon, who was for thirty years the minister of the Independent congregation there. Accordingly he was instructed in their strict tenets, and his early education was obtained in their school at Mill-Hill ; but being removed to the public grammar school under Dr. Valpy, he there acquired a love of Shakspeare and the drama—forbidden ground to his native sect—and soon adopted the less rigid doctrines of the Church of England. At the same time he acquired those ardent political feelings, which, tempered by time, he has always since maintained. His poetical talent was developed equally early. In the year 1811, while still at school, he published a volume entitled "Poems on various Subjects." The subjects are interesting, as evincing the character of his thoughts at this early period. One of them, entitled "On the Education of the Poor," and another, "The Union and Brotherhood of Mankind," obtained for him the acquaintance of Joseph Fox, distinguished for his zeal in the cause of education, and this new friend introduced

him by letter to Lord (then Mr. Henry Brougham). He was received by that distinguished individual with the utmost kindness, and encouraged to work his way to the bar through literature. Following this judicious advice, he engaged himself in 1813 to Mr. Chitty for a period of four years.

The literary career of the young lawyer began with an essay published in the "Pamphleteer," early in 1813, entitled "An Appeal to the Protestant Dissenters of Great Britain on behalf of the Catholics." This essay was eloquently written and breathed a spirit of liberality, such as is rightly denominated "Christian." Talfourd was then under eighteen. "A Critical Examination of some objections taken by Cobbett to the Unitarian Relief Bill," was a very successful attempt to grapple with a writer of such singular power. "Observations on the Punishment of the Pillory," and "An Appeal against the Act for regulating Royal Marriages," took the side of humanity against barbarous custom and mistaken notions of national policy.

An "Attempt to Estimate the Poetical Talent of the Present Age," written in 1815, is chiefly remarkable as testifying his high appreciation of the poetry of Wordsworth, (at a period when such a testimony was sufficient to ensure almost universal ridicule,) and scarcely less so for the courage with which it denounced the gloomy exaggerations of Lord Byron, who was then in the full blaze of his popularity. Hazlitt's "Spirit of the Age," was not published till ten years afterwards. Mr. Talfourd was probably the very first who publicly declared, on critical grounds, that William Wordsworth was a true poet. In this declaration, as in several others in this "Estimate," he displayed the very uncommon critical faculty of *discovering the truth by its own light*, and the almost as uncommon courage and generosity in telling the world—without equivocation or escape-valves—what he had found.

In 1817, Talfourd started as a Special Pleader. During his period of study he had assisted Mr. Chitty in his voluminous work on the Criminal Laws. The chief quarters in which he carried on his literary labours, were now in the "Retrospective Review," and the "Encyclopædia Metropolitana." The articles on "Homer," on "Greek Tragedians," and "Greek Lyric Poets," in the latter, were written by him. He began his connec-

tion with the "New Monthly" in 1820, and continued to furnish the dramatic criticisms, besides other papers, in that magazine for twelve years. He subsequently wrote in the "Edinburgh Review" and "London Magazine," and published in 1826 a Memoir of Mrs. Radcliffe, prefixed to her posthumous work of "Gaston de Blondenville." About the same time he brought out an edition of "Dickenson's Guide to the Quarter Sessions," a labour for which the puzzled brains of country squires best know how to feel grateful to him.

Mr. Talfourd was called to the bar by the Society of the Middle Temple in 1821, and joined the Oxford Circuit and Berkshire Sessions. In 1822 he married Rachel, daughter of John Powell Rutt, Esq., a name well known to political reformers.

The gradual extension of his professional engagements through the circuit, induced him to retire from the sessions at the expiration of twelve years, when he was called to the degree of Serjeant—the very same year in which he wrote his tragedy of "Ion." He now confines his practice almost exclusively to the circuit of the Common Pleas. Any exception has been on occasions when his sympathies excited him to exertion. He undertook the defence of the "True Sun" newspaper in the King's Bench, and electrified the court by his eloquence on that occasion. His defence of "Tait's Magazine" against Richmond, in the Exchequer, was equally brilliant and sound of argument.

In 1834, the electors of Reading returned their distinguished townsman to Parliament by a large majority, composed of all parties. He was returned again in the General Election of 1839, but declined standing in that of 1841. His parliamentary career has been distinguished by the same high talent, consistency of principle, and moral purpose, which have pervaded his life. His most celebrated speeches are those on moving for the Law of Copyright, and on bringing forward his "Custody of Infants" Bill. The tone and style of the former speech were, like its subject, new to the ear of the House; but he was listened to with deep attention, while with earnest and fluent language, assisted by happy illustrative reference, he enforced the claims of the struggling professors of literature upon that property in the products of the brain, which the law allowed to be wrested from them. With regard to the Custody

of Infants, his attempt to obtain an alteration of the statute. which in every case of separation, though the character of the wife was as free from spot or taint as that of the husband was sullied by vice, yet relentlessly tore the children from their mother, and gave them as his sole right to the father—was advocated with indefatigable zeal, and finally with success.

Mr. Serjeant Talfourd was an assiduous discharger of his parliamentary duties, when not engaged on the circuit; notwithstanding which, he always found time for literature. The two tragedies which succeeded "Ion," were written while he was in Parliament. He also at that period published an edition of the "Letters of Lamb," with a touching and masterly sketch of the life of his old friend; a delightful book to all true lovers of literature.

While the leisure hours of Mr. Talfourd have been enriched with the society of the most distinguished literary characters of the time, for among his friends have been—the living would be too numerous to mention—Godwin, Hazlitt, Coleridge, Lamb, &c., he never forgot his old master, Dr. Valpy. Among other instances of friendly intercourse, which continued to the close of Dr. Valpy's life, he regularly attended all the meetings of the school, and always wrote the epilogues to the Greek Plays triennially performed.

Mr. Talfourd is remarkable for having achieved an equally high reputation in law and in letters; and it is almost as peculiar a circumstance that he has had so few dissentient voices among the critics of his day. Dissentient voices of course he has had to endure, as all eminent men must have in their lifetime, and more or less afterwards; but if the worthy Serjeant has occasionally suffered, he has not had more than "his share," while the majority have cordially admitted his claims with such slight objections or differences of opinion with him, and with each other, as are natural to different minds in contemplating the same objects. The spirit of fairness asks and permits this amicable discussion on all hands, and with this feeling the following critical remarks are submitted.

If the public, with its leaders and teachers and censors of the present day, are cold and indifferent with regard to dramatic literature, or positively hostile when a drama is published without having been produced on the

stage—it is probable that matters were still worse in this respect when Mr. Talfourd commenced his dramatic career. To complete, therefore, the peculiarity of his position, he wrung from the public and the influencers of its opinions—opinions which seemed to assume some credit to themselves for their undramatic tendencies—a triumph, and on the very stage, for a legitimate drama; and while the age had been returning, in the more prominent of its late poetry, to the Shakspearean and Elizabethan standards, he stood in the doorway of the Gallic-Greek-English school, and took the town by surprise with a new “Cato” of a stronger colouring and calibre. We say advisedly the Gallic-Greek-English school—meaning the Gallic conception of the Greek drama, which is indeed a thing as unlike the reality, as Versailles is to the Parthenon; and which Dryden helped to naturalize in England, when he “reformed” our versification generally, upon the Gallic conception of rhythm. Of this school (not that we for a moment would hint at any actual similarity) were Addison’s “Cato,” Johnson’s “Irene,” and Holme’s “Douglas;” and of this, in our later age, arose “Ion,” which is well worth all the three, taking them on their own ground; more exalted than “Cato,” more eloquent than “Irene,” and more purely tender than “Douglas;” with a glow from end to end, which may be called the *sentiment* of unity, and which nobly distinguishes it from all. Let the same question of origin be put to Mr. Talfourd’s as to the “Ion” of Euripides,

Καί τις γάλακτι σ' ἐξέθρεψε Δελφιδῶν;

and it must be answered, we believe, even so.

Of the concentration and passion of the Shakspearean drama, Mr. Talfourd’s first dramatic production does not, as we have assumed, partake. The appeal of his tragedy is to the *conscientiousness* of its audience; and it purifies less by pity and terror, than by admiration and exaltation. Its power is less an intellectual and poetical than a moral power; and the peculiarity of its sublime lies significantly in the excellence of its virtue. For,—avoiding any loose classification of this tragedy with the works of the Greek dramatists, on the specious ground of its containing that awful dogma of fatalism which is the thunder of the Æschylean drama; the critic will recognize, upon consideration, that while the design of “Ion” turns upon a remorseless fatalism, the principal

action turns upon Virtue completing herself within the narrow bounds left by Destiny to Life. It is not only a drama of fate, but of self-devoted duty. The necessity of woe is not stronger in it, than the necessity of heroism. The determination of the heroic free-will confronts in it gloriously the predestination of circumstance. And, strikingly and contrastingly effective, there arises beside the *vis inertiae* of the colossal Fate, and the *vis certaminis* of the high-hearted victim, the tender elevated purity of the woman Clemanthe; equal in augustness to either power, and crushed disconsolately between both.

This mixture of the pure Christian principle of faith and love with the Greek principle of inexorable fate, produces an incongruity in the tragedy which raises a conflict in the mind. Capricious demons are left triumphant, and noble humanity is sacrificed. The very same effect is equally produced by the method and style of the execution. In the Greek mode of treating these subjects the sublime rather than the beautiful is aimed at; the sterner and colder characters of the actors, and the powerful effect of the chorus, nerve the mind to bear the contemplation of humanity in the iron grasp of Fate. Above all, sympathy is not allowed to rest satisfied with the triumph of the remorseless gods, for the old Greek tragedians (if we except Æschylus) were most of them sceptical at heart. The choruses, besides their alarms, would have "had their doubts."

The tragedy of "Ion" has an admirable unity of purpose and expression; a unity apart from the "unities," and exceeding them in critical value; and in itself an essential characteristic of every high work of art. The conception springs clear from the author's mind, and alights with fulness upon the reader's; the interest is uninterrupted throughout, and the final impression distinct. To the language, may be attributed appropriateness and eloquence, with some occasional redundance, and a certain deficiency in strength: the images are rather elegant than bold or original; and the versification flows gracefully and copiously within the limits of the school. The effect of the whole is such as would be created were it possible to restore the ground-plan of an Athenian temple in its majestic and simple proportions, and decorate it with the elegant statues of Canova.

Mr. Talfourd's second work of "The Athenian Captive," has much of the ruling principle, and most of the

features of his former tragedy, though with sufficient variety in its structure and adornments. If he appears somewhat haunted by the ideal virtue of his "Ion," it is not an ignoble bewitchment; nor could any right priestly hand extend itself very eagerly to exorcise a "man of Lawe" of the nineteenth century, from the presence of such high chivalrous shadows. It was produced under Mr. Macready's auspices, who personated the chief character very finely. The effect of the tragedy was very good in itself; very well received by a crowded audience; promised to become a refining influence upon the stage—a stage so much needing such assistance—was played three or four times, and has never been acted since. The mysteries, like the stupidities, of Management, are inscrutable.

The tragedy of "Glencoe,"—or "The Fate of the Macdonalds," again displayed the learned author's tendency to revert to the old classical tyranny of fate. But still greater varieties were introduced in the present instance than in the production last named. And not merely in the scenery and costume; nor in the wish to write for a favourite actor—though the "Advertisement to the Second Edition" would lead us fully to expect this.

"It was composed in the last vacation at Glandwr, in the most beautiful part of North Wales, chiefly for the purpose of embodying the feelings which the grandest scenery in the Highlands of Scotland had awakened, when I visited them in the preceding autumn. I had no distinct intention at that time of seeking for it a trial on the stage; but having almost unconsciously blended with the image of the hero, *the figure*, the *attitudes*, and the *tones* of the great actor whom I had associated for many years with every form of tragedy, I could not altogether repress the hope that I might one day enjoy the delight, &c. &c. The Play was printed, merely for the purpose of being presented to my friends; but when only two or three copies had been presented, I was encouraged to believe that it would one day be acted," &c. &c.

Passing over such objections as might be made to a "tragedy" being written chiefly for the purpose of describing the emotions induced by any local scenery—what a development is contained, in the last two sentences, of the condition of dramatic affairs in this country!—of the all-powerful position of a manager or principal actor, and of the humiliating position of the dramatic poet. Here we see one of the most able and eminent men of the time humbly relating how he was "encouraged to believe that his play would one day be acted!" Instead of Mr. Talfourd being in a position to command the representation of any production, it turns out that he is exactly in the position of all other dram-

artists—acted or unacted. Yet people wonder at the poverty of the modern acted drama, and of the dearth of any new pieces of the higher class. If Mr. Talfourd, with his third tragedy, felt himself surrounded and oppressed with all these doubts and difficulties, what wonder that nearly all other dramatists should have had no chance. The accusations of partiality or favoritism in the selection of the productions of particular men—except in the single instance of Sir E. L. Bulwer—are comparatively unfounded. The expenses now thought necessary to incur in the production of a new five-act piece upon the stage, are so heavy, that very few new pieces *can* be produced in a season; so that the general system is a tolerably impartial and sweeping rejection, for which it is foolishly thought requisite by managements to offer some other reasons, critical or prevaricating.

But in this tragedy of “Glencoe,” there is not only the charm of descriptive poetry, there is also the poetry of feeling, and of deep unaffected sentiment. It has nothing in common with that mawkish sentimentality and affectation of something profound, either in thought or feeling, which are discoverable in too many productions of our day. In “Glencoe” there is developed clearly, and truly, that anguish which overcomes a noble mind, when its affections, having been drawn out under the half-guilty, half-innocent guise of female friendship, till the devotion became entire and absorbing the whole being—are put aside and evaded by the fair friend on the score of nothing more than friendship having been understood. An anguish in which the future life of the lover has become a drifting wreck; and that of the thoughtless deceiver generally a sacrifice to some ungenial and selfish alliance. The tragedy ends rather poorly in comparison with the expectations raised by the emotions previously excited; but that one striking phase in the history of human hearts, is, however, embodied in “Glencoe,” and with a force, which the delicacy and refinement of the language sometimes renders less apparent to the ear than to the sensibility, but which is derived from its inherent truth, and clearness of development.

It may be said of Mr. Talfourd, as a general estimate of his character, abilities, and aim in life, that his whole career has been equally distinguished by high moral

purpose, and by the most unquestionable talents. It does not fall within the scope of this work to enter into any examination of Mr. Talfourd's legal abilities; we must, therefore, content ourselves with observing, that the marked anxiety of professional men to obtain his services can only be the result of an experience of the most advantageous results.

R. M. MILNES AND H. COLERIDGE.

"Oh, Sir! pray is this gold?—and this?—and this?"

* * * * *

Doth it sound?—

Melodiously—a golden tune."—SHIRLEY'S *Arcadia*.

THE poetry of Richard Monckton Milnes has met with considerable praise in many quarters, yet hardly as much as it deserves; and it has met with peculiar dispraise, more than it deserves, either in kind or degree. A common case enough. Of the poetry of Hartley Coleridge—as of Charles Tennyson, and Thomas Wade—we may say, without fear of contradiction, that, like many other good things, it is not at all known to the public.

Mr. Milnes has been accused of a want of the divine fire of imagination and passion; and he has, moreover, been accused of merely thinking that he thinks, or of imitating the tone and current of other men's minds, and mistaking that for the original impulse and production of his own. Not any of these broad accusations are justifiable, and in some respects they are demonstrably unfounded.

Mr. Milnes does not appear to possess the least *dramatic* passion, nor does he display much impulse or energy in his poetry. There is no momentum in the progress of his lines; and the want is conspicuously betrayed in his blank verse, because, of all other forms, that is the one which absolutely requires the most genuine, thought-sustained, and unflagging energies. We are almost tempted to hazard the opinion that fine blank verse requires great material stamina; in fact, a powerful internal physique, to carry on the burthen and purpose of the soul. We think that the psychological history of nearly every one of our great poets who wrote in blank verse, will bear us out in the opinion. Several exceptions are undoubtedly against this; and the greatest of them would be Keats; yet here the exception would tend to prove the rule, as he died soon after the production of his only poem in blank verse, which is, moreover, unfinished. How far this latter speculation—which, indeed, may be of no sound value—would be applicable or inapplicable to the poet at present under dis-

cussion, need not be considered, because he seldom writes in blank verse; he is essentially a lyrical poet; but to his occasionally attempting the former may be attributed some of the accusations of want of passion and impulsive energies.

But the most ostensible is not always the most forcible; there is latent fire as well as palpable combustion; and the effect of genuine elements, though always proportionate to its cause, must seem inadequate, in all cases of very refined or quiet development, except to those who are prepared with a ready sympathy, and can recognize the deepest source from the least murmuring that rises up to the surface. A poet should be judged by the class to which he belongs, and by the degree of success he attains in his own favourite aim. Mr. Milnes, regarding poetry as "the gods' most choicest dower," says of it, in his "Leucas,"—

"Poesy, which in chaste repose abides,
As in its atmosphere; that placid flower
Thou hast exposed to passion's fiery tides," &c.

Here, at once, we discover Mr. Milnes' theory, and the chief aim of his muse. Sappho is blamed for steeping her verse in "passion's fiery tides," because poesy is said to abide "in chaste repose," as its proper atmosphere. By this standard, then, is the poetry of Richard Monckton Milnes to be measured; it is a standard of inherent beauty; and he will be found to attain it most completely. A short extract from one of the earliest poems in his collection, published ten years ago, will suffice to illustrate this.

"But when in clearer unison
That marvellous concord still went on;
And *gently as a blossom grows*
A frame of syllables uprose;
With a delight akin to fear
My heart beat fast and strong, to hear
Two murmurs beautifully blent,
As of a voice and instrument,
A hand laid lightly on low chords,
A voice that sobbed between its words.
'Stranger! the voice that trembles in your ear
You would have placed had you been fancy-free
First in the chorus of the happy sphere,
The home of deified mortality.
* * * * *
Stranger, the voice is Sappho's—weep; oh! weep,
That the soft tears of sympathy may fall
Into this prison of the sunless deep,
Where I am laid in miserable thrall.' *—*Leucas*.

It is as a lyric and elegiac poet (in the ancient sense of elegy) with a temperament rather elegiac than lyric, that Mr. Monckton Milnes takes his place among the distinguished writers of his age and country. Notwithstanding that he has written "Poetry for the People," neither in the work in question nor in any other, has he given evidence of a genius calculated for popular appeals. He might have called his work "Poetry for the Philosophers;" but the very philosophers should be of the upper House and accustomed to tread softly upon Plato's carpets, or they would be found inevitably defective, now and then, in their range of sympathies. For Mr. Milnes is an aristocrat in literature and modes of thought; though we are far from meaning to insinuate that he merely "writes like a gentleman;" his mind and heart are too strong in the "humanities." But the impulses of mind and heart, although abundantly human and true, are surrounded by so definite a circle of intellectual habit, that they cannot, or, at least, do not cast themselves beyond it; and they remain coloured by the mode. He thinks the truth out boldly, and feels generously the use of speaking it; but the medium of expression between him and the public, is somewhat conventionally philosophical in its character, and too fine and recondite in its peculiarities, to be appreciated by the people popularly so called.

The poetical productions of Hartley Coleridge are also exclusively lyrical and elegiac. He is one of the many instances of the disadvantage of having an eminent father. It was almost impossible for the son of such a man not to be influenced by his father's genius to a degree that is destructive of originality. With strong feeling, a bright fancy, and a facility of versification, there is yet a certain hard resemblance in the poems of the son to the poems of the father, which may perhaps be termed an unconscious mechanism of the faculties, acting under the associations of love. His designs want invention, and his rhapsodies abandonment. His wildness does not look quite spontaneous, but as if it blindly followed something erratic. The mirth seems rather forced; but the love and the melancholy are his own. Hartley Coleridge has a sterling vein of thought in him, without a habit and order of thought. It is extremely probable that he keeps his best things to himself. His father talked his best thoughts, so that some-

body had the benefit of them; his son for the most part keeps his for his own bosom.

We are averse to notice a man's politics in speaking of his poetry, but Mr. Hartley Coleridge forces his spleen disagreeably upon the attention, especially in his "Leonard and Susan."

But if the lovers of poetry have done wrong to suffer the verses of Hartley Coleridge to sink into the mass of forgotten publications, it is a far stronger ground of complaint that the poems of Thomas Wade — author of "Mundi et Cordis Carmina," "Helena," and "Prothanasia," &c., should not have fared very much better in respect of popularity. The first of these works contains many echoes of other poets, the consequence of studies in a "loving spirit," but the echoes are true to their origin, and in the finest spirit. In most cases, the thoughts and images are his own, derived from his own imagination, and from the depths of his being. This is more especially the case with "Prothanasia," which is founded upon a passage in the correspondence of Bettine Brentano with Goethe, and is well worthy of its foundation. A few lines of invocation will display the fervid tone of this poem:—

"Beautiful River! could I flow like thee,
Year after year, thro' this deliciousness
Ever-renewing; and retain no more
Of human thought and passion than might yield
A loving consciousness of grace and joy;
I could content me to endure, till Time
Had heap'd such million'd years upon his record,
As almost in himself to seem and be
The sole Eternity!—O, trees and flowers;
Joy-throated birds: and ye, soft airs and hues,
That nestle in yon skiey radiance!
Ilappy ye are, as beautiful: to your life,
Unrealised, unrealisable,
Intolerable. infinite desire
Approacheth never; and ye live and die,
Your natures all-fulfilling and fulfill'd,
Self-satiate and perfected."

It is impossible to believe that such a poem should not some day find its just appreciation in the public mind. And it is the least of the merits of this author's productions that they display a care and classical finish from which many well-known writers might derive a very salutary lesson.

The following is one of Mr. Wade's sonnets, the prophetic spirit of which is its own sufficient comment. It is entitled "A Prophecy."

"There is a mighty dawning on the earth,
 Of human glory : dreams unknown before
 Fill the mind's boundless world, and wondrous birth
 Is given to great thought : the deep-drawn lore,
 But late a hidden fount, at which a few
 Quaff'd and were glad, is now a flowing river,
 Which the parch'd nations may approach and view,
 Kneel down and drink, or float in it for ever :
 The bonds of Spirit are asunder broken,
 And Matter makes a very sport of distance ;
 On every side appears a silent token
 Of what will be hereafter, when Existence
 Shall even become a pure and equal thing,
 And earth sweep high as heaven, on solemn wing."

And this, also by the same author, is a striking proof
 of intellectual subtlety :—

"God will'd Creation ; but Creation was not
 The cause of that Almighty Will of God,
 But that great God's desire of emanation :
 Beauty of Human Love the object is ;
 But Love's sweet cause lives in the Soul's desire
 For intellectual, sensual sympathies :
 Seeing a plain-plumed bird, in whose deep throat
 We know the richest power of music dwells,
 We long to hear its linked melodies :
 Scenting a far-off flower's most sweet perfume,
 That gives its balm of life to every wind,
 We crave to mark the beauty of its bloom :
 But bird nor flower is that Volition's cause :
 But Music and fine Grace, graven on the Soul, like laws."

It may be said that there is such a thing as an author's
 voluntary abandonment of the field ; and that this is pecu-
 liarly the case with regard to Hartley Coleridge, and to
 Charles Tennyson. Perhaps so ; still it is not a poet's
 business to be his own bellman. Be this as it may,
 there is something peculiarly touching in the withdraw-
 al of Charles Tennyson from the pathway to the temple
 of Poesy, as though he would prefer to see his brother's
 name enshrined with an undivided fame. One little
 volume of sweet and unpretending poetry comprises all
 we know of him. It has long been out of print. His
 feeling of the "use and service" of poetry in the world
 may be comprised in a few lines, which may also be re-
 garded as the best comment upon his own ;—

We must have music while we languish here,
 To make the Soul with pleasant fancies rife
 And soothe the stranger from another sphere.

Sonnet xv.

But perhaps we had better give one of Charles Ten-
 nyson's sonnets entire :—

"I trust thee from my soul, O Mary dear,
 But, oftentimes when delight has fullest power,
 Hope treads too lightly for herself to hear,
 And doubt is ever by until the hour :

I trust thee, Mary, but till thou art mine
 Up from thy foot unto thy golden hair,
 O let me still misgive thee and repine,
 Uncommon doubts spring up with blessings rare !
 Thine eyes of purest love give surest sign,
 Drooping with fondness, and thy blushes tell
 A flitting tale of steadiest faith and zeal ;
 Yet I will doubt—to make success divine !
 A tide of summer dreams with gentlest swell
 Will bear upon me then, and I shall love most well !"

Sonnet xxiii.

Mr. Milnes's earlier poems are more individual in expression and ideal in their general tone, and probably contain more essential poetry and more varied evidence of their author's gifts, than the writings which it has since pleased him to vouchsafe to the public. He has since divested himself of the peculiarities which offended some critics, and has more studiously incarnated himself to the perception of readers not poetical. The general character of his genius is gentle and musing. The shadow of an academical tree, if not of a temple-column, seems to lie across his brows, which are bland and cheerful none the less. He has too much real sensibility, too much active sympathy with the perpetual workings of nature and humanity, to have any morbid moaning sentimentality. Beauty he sees always ; but moral and spiritual beauty, the light kernelled in the light, he sees supremely. Never will you hear him ask, in the words of a great contemporary poet,

"And is there any moral shut
 Within the bosom of a rose ?"

because while he would eschew with that contemporary the vulgar utilitarianism of moral drawing, he would perceive as distinctly as the rose itself, and perhaps more distinctly, the spiritual significance of its beauty. His philosophy looks upward as well as looks round—looks upward because it looks round : it is essentially and specifically Christian. His poetry is even ecclesiastical sometimes ; and the author of "One Tract More," and his tendency towards a decorative religion, are to be recognized in the haste with which he lights a taper before a picture, or bends beneath a "Papal Benediction." For the rest, he is a very astringent Protestant in his love for ratiocination—and he occasionally draws out his reasons into a fine line of metaphysics. He sits among the muses, making reasons ; and when Apollo plucks him by the ear to incite him to some more purely

poetic work,—then he sings them. With every susceptibility of sense and fancy, and full of appreciations of art, he would often write pictorially if he did not nearly always write analytically. Moreover, he makes sentiments as well as reasons; and whatever may be the nobility of sentiment or thought, the words are sure to be worthy of it. He has used metres in nearly every kind of combination, and with results almost uniformly, if not often exquisitely, harmonious and expressive. There may be a slight want of suppleness and softness in his lighter rhythms, and his blank verse appears to us defective in intonation and variety, besides such deficiencies as we have previously suggested; but the intermediate forms of composition abundantly satisfy the ear. With all this, he is quite undramatic; and in matters of character and story, has scarcely ever gone the length, and that never very successfully, even of the ordinary ballad writer. His poems, for the most part, are what is called “occasional,”—their motive—impulse arising from without. He perceives and responds, rather than creates. Yet he must have the woof of his own personality to weave upon. With the originality which every man possesses who has strength enough to be true to his individuality, his genius has rather the air of reflection than of inspiration; his muse is a Pythia competent to wipe the foam from her lips—if there be any foam. Thoughtful and self-possessed instead of fervent and impulsive, he is tender instead of passionate. And when he rises above his ordinary level of philosophy and tenderness, it is into a still air of rapture instead of into exulting tumults and fervours. Even his love poems, for which he has been crowned by the critics with such poor myrtle as they could gather, present a serene transfiguring of life instead of any quickening of the currents of life: the poet’s heart never beats so tumultuously as to suspend his observation of the beating of it—

“And the beating of my own heart
Was all the sound I heard.”

The general estimate of him, in brief, is a thinking, feeling man, worshipping and loving as a man should—gifted naturally, and refined socially; and singing the songs of his own soul and heart, in a clear, sweet serenity, which does not want depth, none the less faithfully and nobly, that he looks occasionally from the harp—

strings to the music-book. His "Lay of the Humble," "Long Ago," and other names of melodies, strike upon the memory as softly and deeply as a note of the melodies themselves—while (apart from these lyrics) he has written some of the fullest and finest sonnets, not merely of our age, but of our literature.

The three other poets mentioned in this paper have each written very fine sonnets. Those of Charles Tennyson are extremely simple and unaffected; the spontaneous offspring of the feelings and the fancy—those of Thomas Wade are chiefly of the intellect; high-wrought, recondite, refined, classical, and often of sterling thought, with an upward and onward eye: those of Hartley Coleridge are reflective; the emanations of a sad heart, aimless, of little hope, and resigned, seeming to proceed from one who has suffered the best of his life to slip away from him unused. Sonnet IX. pathetically expresses this.

"Long time a child, and still a child, when years
Had painted manhood on my cheek, was I;
For yet I lived like one not born to die;
A thriftless prodigal of smiles and tears,
No hope I needed, and I knew no fears.
But sleep, though sweet, is only sleep, and waking,
I waked to sleep no more, at once o'ertaking
The vanguard of my age, with all arrears
Of duty on my back. Nor child, nor man,
Nor youth, nor sage, I find my head is grey,
For I have lost the race I never ran,
A rathe December blights my lagging May;
And still I am a child, tho' I be old,
Time is my debtor for my years untold."

The prose writings of Hartley Coleridge—particularly his "Yorkshire Worthies," and his Introduction to "Massinger and Ford,"—are all of first-rate excellence. It is much to be regretted they are not more numerous.

REV. S. SMITH, A. FONBLANQUE,

AND

DOUGLAS JERROLD.

“Hard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whom they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest.”—BEAUMONT.

“His fine wit
Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it.”—SHELLEY.

“I shall talk nothing but crackers and fire-works to-night.”—BEN JONSON.

“Hold out, ye guiltie and ye galled hides,
And meet my far-fetched stripes with waiting sides.”—HALL’S SATIRES.

THE present age is destined for the first time in the history of literature and of the human mind, to display Wit systematically and habitually employed by the great majority of its possessors in the endeavour to promote the public good. While great satirists like Juvenal and Horace have been “on virtue’s side,” they shone all the more for being exceptions to the fraternity. Not only the vices, the follies, the vanities, the weaknesses of our fellow-creatures, have furnished the best subjects for the shafts of wit ; but little self-denial was practised with reference to the nobler feelings and actions of humanity. To take a flight directly to modern times, let us alight at once upon the days of Charles the Second, when the laugh was raised indiscriminately at vice or virtue, honesty or knavery, wisdom or folly. Whatever faults such great writers as Swift and Butler, or Moliere and Voltaire, may sometimes have committed in directing their ridicule amiss, their intentions, at least, were reformatory, and therefore their errors are not to be compared with the licentious poison which spouted glistening from the pens of Wycherly, Farquhar, Congreve, and Vanbrugh, who had no noble aim or object, or good intention, whether sound or self-deluding—but whose vicious instinct almost invariably prompted them to render heartless vice and wanton dishonesty, as attractive and successful as possible, and make every sincere and valuable quality seem dull or

ridiculous. All the great writers of Fables — writers who are among the best instructors, and noblest benefactors of their species — have been humorists rather than wits, and do not properly come into the question.

Up to the present period, the marked distinction between humour and wit has been that the former evinced a pleasurable sympathy; the latter, a cutting derision. Humour laughed with humanity; wit *at* all things. But now, for the first time, as a habit and a principle, do all the established wits, and the best rising wits, walk arm-in-arm in the common recognition of a moral aim. The very banding together of a number of genuine and joyous wits in the “London Charivari,” instead of all being at “daggers drawn” with each other in the old way, is in itself a perfectly novel event in the history of letters; and when this fact is taken in conjunction with the unquestionable good feeling and service in the cause of justice and benevolence displayed by its writers, the permanent existence and extensive success of such a periodical is one of the most striking and encouraging features of the age.

The strongest instances of the commencement of this change are to be found in the writings of Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, and Leigh Hunt. No man has left such a number of axiomatic sayings, at once brilliant and true, as Hazlitt. That they are mixed up with many things equally brilliant, and only half-true, or, perhaps, not true at all, is not the question: he always meant them for honest truths, and invariably had a definite moral purpose in view. Perhaps in the works of Charles Lamb, and the prose writings of Leigh Hunt, wit and humour may be said to unite, and for the production of a moral effect. An anxiety to advance the truth and promote the happiness, the right feeling, the knowledge, and the welfare of mankind, is conspicuous in all the principal essays of these three authors. That the same thing should ever come to be said of wits in general, shows that the good feeling of mankind has at length enlisted on its side those brilliant “shots” who had previously refused all union or co-operation, and who, having been equally unsparing of friend or foe, rendered every noble action liable to be made ridiculous, and therefore, to a certain extent, impeded both private and public improvement and elevation of character. It should here be observed that the office of the poetical

Satirist appears to have died out, not because there are no such men (as the world always says when no "such" man appears), but because there is no demand for him.

The three writers, each of whose names possesses a peculiar lustre of its own, have a lively sense of the humorous, but are not in themselves great as humorists. Mr. Jerrold is the only one of the three who exercises any of the latter faculty in a consecutive and characterizing form, and even with him it is apt to ramble widely, and continually emerges in caustic or sparkling dialogue and repartee, which are his forte.

The Reverend Sydney Smith gives a laconic account of the commencement of his own career in the Preface to his published works, and as his own words usually "defy competition," the best plan will be to let him speak for himself.

"When first I went into the Church," says he, "I had a curacy in the middle of Salisbury Plain. The Squire of the parish took a fancy to me, and requested me to go with his son to reside at the University of Weimar; before we could get there, Germany became the seat of war, and in stress of politics we put into Edinburgh, where I remained five years. The principles of the French Revolution were then fully afloat, and it is impossible to conceive a more violent and agitated state of society. Among the first persons with whom I became acquainted were, Lord Jeffrey, Lord Murray (late Lord Advocate for Scotland,) and Lord Brougham; all of them maintaining opinions upon political subjects a little too liberal for the dynasty of Dundas, then exercising a supreme power over the northern division of the island.

"One day we happened to meet in the eighth or ninth story or flat in Buccleugh-place, the elevated residence of the then Mr. Jeffrey. I proposed that we should set up a Review; this was acceded to with acclamation. I was appointed Editor, and remained long enough in Edinburgh to edit the first number of the Edinburgh Review. The motto I proposed for the Review was,

'Tenui musam meditatur avena.'

'We cultivate literature upon a little oatmeal.'

But this was too near the truth to be admitted, and so we took our present grave motto from *Publius Syrus*, of whom none of us had, I am sure, ever read a single line; and so began what has since turned out to be a very important and able journal. When I left Edinburgh, it fell into the stronger hands of Lord Jeffrey and Lord Brougham, and reached the highest point of popularity and success."

After giving various good reasons for a high appreciation of the "Edinburgh Review" at the time it started, Sydney Smith says—

"I see very little in my Reviews to alter or repent of: I always endeavoured to fight against evil; and what I thought evil then, I think evil now. I am heartily glad that all our disqualifying laws for religious opinions are abolished, and I see nothing in such measures but unmixed good and real increase of strength to our Establishment."

The few words with which he introduces the celebrated "Letters of Peter Plymley" (which were so very instrumental in assisting the Catholic emancipation by

extreme ridicule of all needless alarms upon the occasion) are inimitable :—

“ Somehow or another, it came to be conjectured that I was the author : *I have always denied it ; but finding that I deny it in vain, I have thought it might be as well to include the Letters in this Collection* : they had an immense circulation at the time, and I think above 20,000 copies were sold.”

As displaying the political and social opinions of Sydney Smith, the following may suffice :—

“ It is always considered as a piece of impertinence in England, if a man of less than two or three thousand a year has any opinions at all upon important subjects ; and, in addition, he was sure at that time to be assailed with all the Billingsgate of the French Revolution — Jacobin, Leveller, Atheist, Deist, Socinian, Incendiary, Regicide, were the gentlest appellations used ; and the man who breathed a syllable against the senseless bigotry of the two Georges, or hinted at the abominable tyranny and persecution exercised upon Catholic Ireland, was shunned as unfit for the relations of social life. Not a murmur against any abuse was permitted ; to say a word against the suitoricide delays of the Court of Chancery, or the cruel punishments of the Game Laws, or against any abuse which a rich man inflicted or a poor man suffered, was treason against the *Plousiocracy*, and was bitterly and steadily resented.”

“ We believe,” says the ‘Times,’ in a notice of the works of Sydney Smith, “ that the concession of full defence to prisoners by counsel, is a boon for which humanity is in great measure indebted to the effect produced upon the public mind by his vigorous article in the ‘Edinburgh Review,’ for December, 1828.” Previous to this a man might be hanged before he had been half heard.

Something remains to be added to this : Sydney Smith is opposed to the Ballot, and the Penny Postage, and is in favour of capital punishment—apparently preferring retribution to reformation. His feelings are always generous and sincere, whatever may be thought of his judgment in certain things, and his Sermons are replete with pure doctrine, toleration, and liberality of sentiment. The Irish Catholics ought to erect a monument to him, with his statue on the top—looking very grave, but with the hands “ holding both his sides,” and the tablets at the base covered with bas-relief selected from the graphic pages of Peter Plymley.

Although wit is the great predominating characteristic of the writings of Sydney Smith, the finest and most original humour is not unfrequently displayed. Under this latter head may be classed his review in the “Edinburgh” of Dr. Langford’s “Anniversary Sermon of the Royal Humane Society.” The review is so laconic that we give it entire.

"An accident, which happened to the gentleman engaged in reviewing this Sermon, proves, in the most striking manner, the importance of this charity for restoring to life persons in whom the vital power is suspended. He was discovered with Dr. Langford's discourse lying open before him in a state of the most profound sleep; from which he could not, by any means, be awakened for a great length of time. By attending, however, to the rules prescribed by the Humane Society, flinging in the smoke of tobacco, applying hot flannels, and carefully removing the discourse itself to a great distance, the critic was restored to his disconsolate brothers.

"The only account he could give of himself was, that he remembers reading on, regularly, till he came to the following pathetic description of a drowned tradesman; beyond which he recollects nothing."*

This is the whole of the review, for the quotation follows, so tumid, and drawling, and affected, and common-place, that we forbear to give it, lest the same accident recorded by the critic should occur to the present reader. The "Letters to Archdeacon Singleton" are excellent; and display both wit and humour as well as reason. One of the happiest "turns" among many, is that which he gives to the threat that if clergymen agitate any questions affecting the patronage of the bishops, the democratic Philistines will come down upon the inferior clergy and sweep them all away together. "Be it so," says Sydney Smith; "I am quite ready to be swept away when the time comes. Everybody has his favourite death; some delight in apoplexy, and others prefer miasmus. I would infinitely rather be crushed by democrats, than, under the plea of the public good, be mildly and blandly absorbed by bishops."† The illustrative anecdote which follows this, is inimitable, but we cannot afford space for it.

Albany Fonblanque was intended for the bar, and became a student of the Middle Temple. He was a pupil of Chitty, the special pleader, and from his acuteness and promptitude in seizing upon certain prominent features of a case, great expectations were no doubt entertained of the brightness of his future career in the law. But meantime he had made the discovery that he could write on current topics of interest, and his fellow-students also discovered that what he wrote was a keen hit—"a palpable hit." He soon proceeded to politics. Castlereagh's "Six Acts" made a political writer of him. Totally neglecting the "declarations" and "pleas" himself, and the cause of neglect if not also of "wit" in others, Albany Fonblanque incited the students in Mr. Chitty's office to the discussion of the questions of the

* Works of the Rev. Sydney Smith. Second edition, vol. i., p. 25.

† First Letter to Archdeacon Singleton. Works, vol. iii., p. 195.

day, greatly to the delight and satisfaction of all parties, till a brother pupil occasionally exclaiming in his gleeful edification, "What a pity it is that some one does not say that *in print!*" the idea of actually trying it occurred to the mind of Fonblanque. He wrote "an article,"—it produced an immediate "sensation,"—and discovering, at the same moment, how very much he disliked the law, and how very much he should prefer literature and sharp-shooting, he hurried away from Mr. Chitty's dusky office, and threw himself into the brightest current of the many-branching many-mouthed periodical press.

But the study of the law from which Fonblanque had so gladly emancipated his mind had still been of great value to the subsequent management of his powers. It served to check the natural excesses of a vivid fancy, and to render him searching, acute, logical, and clear-headed amidst contradictory or confusing statements and reasonings. Those who have read any of Sydney Smith's lucubrations in favour of the punishment of death should read Albany Fonblanque's articles, entitled "Capital Punishment,"* and "Justice and Mercy."† A brief extract will serve to show the tone adopted in the former, in which, let us observe, what a fine head and heart had Sir William Meredith, and do him honour who fifty years ago in the very "thick" of all the hanging, considered so right and necessary by everybody else, uplifted his voice against its vindictive inutil-ity. Lord Brougham thinks—that is, in 1831, he thought—differently.

"'Even in crimes which are seldom or never pardoned,' observed Sir William Meredith, half a century ago, 'death is no prevention. Housebreakers, forgers, and coiners, are sure to be hanged: yet housebreaking, forgery, and coining are the very crimes which are oftenest committed. Strange it is, that in the case of blood, of which we ought to be most tender, we should still go on against reason, and against experience, to make unavailing slaughter of our fellow-creatures.'

"'We foresee,' observes Fonblanque, 'that Lord Brougham and Vaux will be a prodigious favourite with the Church. His observation 'that there was nothing in the Bible prohibitory of the punishment of death for other crimes than murder,' reminds us of the reason which the Newgate Ordinary, in Jonathan Wild, gives for his choice of punch, that it is a liquor nowhere spoken ill of in Scripture.

"The common phrase, the severity of punishment, is inaccurate and misleading. Of our punishments no one quality can be predicated. They vary with humour and circumstance. Sometimes they are sanguinary, sometimes gentle; now it is called justice, anon, mercy. If intention were to be infer-

* England under Seven Administrations," vol. ii., p. 156.

† Ibid. Vol. i., p. 194.

red from effect, it would be supposed that the policy of the law had been to improve crime by a sort of gymnastic exercise. When extraordinary activity is observed in any limb of crime, the law immediately corrects the partiality by a smart application of the rod; the ingenuity of the rogues then takes another direction which has hitherto had repose and indulgence, the law after a time pursues it in that quarter with a terrible chastisement; a third is then tried, and so on. By this process all the muscles of crime are in turn exercised, and the body felonious rendered supple, agile, and vigorous. There is as much fashion in what is termed justice as in bonnets or sleeves. The judge's cap is indeed as capricious as the ladies'. Sometimes the trimmings are blood-red, sometimes the sky blue of mercy is in vogue. One assize there is a run of death on horse-dealers; another, the sheep-stealers have their turn; last winter arson was the capital rage; now, death for forgery is said to be coming in again—*ne quid nimis* is the maxim. By this system it has come to pass that our rogues are accomplished in all branches of felony, and practised in resources beyond the rogues of all other countries in the world; and our criminals may be affirmed to be worthy of our Legislators.”*

Mr. Fonblanque's articles on the magistracy, and particularly the one in favour of stipendiary magistrates, in which he opposes Sydney Smith in the “Edinburgh Review,” (who chiefly objected to the abuses which would ensue among the “rural judges,”) are also good specimens of his style. To see edge-tools playing *with each other*, adds a considerable zest to the argument.

“It is no objection to *town* Judges that they are in the pay of Government, yet it is an inseparable one to rural Judges. The Frenchman, according to Joe Miller, who observed that an Englishman recovered from a fever after eating a red-herring, administered one to the first of his fellow-countrymen whom he found labouring under that disease, and having found that it killed him, noted in his tablet that a red-herring cures an Englishman of a fever, but it kills a Frenchman. So, we must note, according to the ‘Edinburgh Reviewer,’ that pay is wholesome for Judges in town, but it is bad for Judges in the country. Pay in town is esteemed the very salt of place, the preservative of honesty which keeps the meat sweet and wholesome, and causes it to set the tooth of calumny and time at defiance. There is the * * * who holds out toughly, like a piece of old junk. What has made him such an everlasting officer? The salt, the pay. When we want to make a good and competent authority, what do we do with him? Souse him in salary; pickle him well with pay. The other day, how we improved the Judges, by giving them another dip in the public pan! But pay, though it *cures* great Judges, corrupts small ones. Our Reviewer says so, and we must believe it. A little pay, like a little learning, is a dangerous thing—drink deep, or touch not the Exchequer spring!”†

The “reply” of the Reverend Sydney Smith to the foregoing, would now be well worth reading, but we are not aware that any appeared.

Douglas Jerrold's father was the manager of a country theatre. He did not, however, “take to the stage,” owing perhaps to his inherent energies, which causing him to feel little interest in fanciful heroes, impelled him to seek his fortune amidst the actual storms and troubles of life. He went on board a man-of-war as a

* “England under Seven Administrations,” vol. ii., p. 158.

† Ibid., vol. ii., p. 85.

midshipman at eleven years of age. On board of this same vessel was Clarkson Stanfield, a midshipman also. The ship was paid off in two years time from Jerrold's joining her; Stanfield and he parted, and never saw each other again till sixteen years afterwards, when they met on the stage of Drury Lane theatre. It was on the night that Jerrold's "Rent Day" was produced.

But to return to Jerrold's early days: his sea-life being at an end, he found himself, at the age of thirteen, with "all London" before him "where to choose"—not what he thought best, but what he could obtain. He learned printing; and followed this during three or four years; he then began to write dramas for minor theatres. He met with more than what is usually considered success at the Surrey theatre, where he was the first who started, or rather revived, what is now known as the English "domestic drama." In speaking of it somewhere he says—"a poor thing, but mine own." It was certainly greatly in advance of the gory melodramas and gross extravagances then in vogue. The "Rent Day" was produced in 1831 or 32; and was followed by "Nell Gwynne," "The Wedding Gown," "The Housekeeper," &c., &c. All these were in two acts, according to the absurd legal compulsion with regard to minor theatres, but which he endeavoured to write in the *spirit* of five.

Mr. Jerrold's position as a dramatist will receive attention in another portion of this work; he is at present chiefly dealt with as a writer of characteristic prose fictions, essays, *jeux d'esprits*, and miscellaneous periodical papers. About the year 1836 he published "Men of Character," in three volumes, most of which had previously appeared in "Blackwood;" and he also contributed to the "New Monthly" during two or three years. In 1842 appeared his "Bubbles of the Day," soon followed by a collection of essays, &c., entitled "Cakes and Ale;" and in 1843 "Punch's Letters to his Son." Mr. Jerrold has also written heaps of political articles, criticisms, and "leaders" without number. His last productions, up to the present date, are the "Story of a Feather," published in a series by the "Punch," and the "Chronicles of Clovernook," and "The Folly of the Sword" in the "Illuminated Magazine," which he edits.

Of writings so full of force and brightness to make

themselves seen and felt, so full of thorough-going manly earnestness for the truth and the right—and so interspersed with tart sayings and bitter irony, touched up with quills of caustic, in attacks of all abuses, viciousness, and selfish depravity—writings so easily accessible, so generally read, and about which there exist no disputes, and seldom any difference of opinion, it is impossible to say enough without saying much more than the majority need, and the only safe proceeding is obviously that of saying very little.

“Brevity” is no more “the soul of wit” than a short stick is the essence of comedy; it must not, therefore, be fancied that in uttering only the fewest words about such productions as “The Bubbles of the Day,” the “Prisoners of War,” &c., we think the best comment has been made upon them. But in truth they are of a kind that require to be read, and seen, and felt, rather than to be discoursed about. Mr. Jerrold never writes anything without a good leading idea, and this he works out chiefly by sharp dialogues, and striking exhibitions of truthful, clearly-defined, valuable characters, all full of life, and of themselves. He is not a good hand at the conduct of a story, and worse in the construction of a plot. In the “Bubbles of the Day” there is wit and character enough for two or three five-act comedies; and there is not story enough, nor action enough for a good one-act drama. He always succeeds, in spite of this utter deficiency, which is fatal to everybody else. Nothing can more forcibly attest the presence of other striking powers. His wit, and his abundance of life-like character, are irresistible. Except, perhaps, a very few productions, such as the beautiful and melancholy sketch of “The Painter of Ghent”—the “Lord of Peiresc,” and some genial criticisms and miscellanies, all his works may be regarded as pungent moral satires. Thrown early upon life—a mere child, with all the world before him and around—his heart and brain still tumultuous, fresh from the bleak seas—with nothing but those two little unaided hands to work out his own immediate maintenance and future fortunes, and without a guide, except his own “natural promptings,” Douglas Jerrold could not fail to see and suffer, and accumulate experience of a kind to turn much of the “milk of human kindness” into gall, and the hopefulness of youth and manhood into shadows and sorrow. But nothing ever quelled his

energies and his belief in good; and a passage through early life, of a kind sufficient to have made a score of misanthropes, and half-a-dozen yet more selfish Apathies,—only served to keep alive his energies, and to excite him to renewed indignation at all the wrongs done in the world, and to unceasing contests with all sorts of oppressions and evil feelings. In waging this battle “against odds,” it is curious to observe how entirely he has been “let alone” in his course. This may be, in part, attributable to the greater portion of his writings appearing in periodicals, which are not generally so fiercely dealt with by adverse opinions, as when a work comes compact in its offences before them; and partly to the non-attachment of their just weight to dramatic productions: but it is also attributable to the fact, that while he is known to be thoroughly honest, outspoken, and fearless, he has at his command such an armoury in his wit, and such “a power” of bitterness in his spleen, that neither one, nor many have ever relished the chances of war in crossing his path with hostility.

The three writers who form the subject of the present paper, are so full of points and glances, so saturated with characteristics, that you may dip into any of their volumes, where the book fully opens of itself, and you shall find something “just like the author.” The Rev. Sydney Smith is always pleased to be so “pleasant,” that it is extremely difficult to stop; and it is remarkable that he clears off his jokes so completely as he goes, either by a sweeping hand, or by carrying on such fragments as he wants to form a bridge to the next one, that you never pause in reading him till fairly obliged to lay down the book. Albany Fonblanque very often gives you pause amidst his pleasantries, many of which, nay, most of which, are upon subjects of politics, or jurisprudence, or the rights and wrongs of our social doings, so that the laugh often stops in mid-volley, and changes into weighty speculation, or inward applause. In his combined powers of the brilliant and argumentative, the narrative and epigrammatic, and his matchless adroitness in illustrative quotation and reference, Fonblanque stands alone. Douglas Jerrold is seldom disposed to be “pleasant”—his merriment is grim—he does not shake your sides so often as shake you by the shoulders—as he would say, “See here, now!—look

there now!—do you know what you are doing!—is *this*, what you think of your fellow-creatures?" A little of his writing goes a great way. You stop very often, and do not return to the book for another dose, till next week, or so. The exceptions to this are chiefly in his acted comedies, where there is a plentiful admixture of brilliant levity and stinging fun; but in all else he usually reads you a lesson of a very trying kind. Even his writings in "Punch" give you more of the baton, than the beverage "in the eye." Sydney Smith has continually written articles for the pure enjoyment and communication of fun; Fonblanque never; Jerrold never, except on the stage—and that was probably only as "matter of income," rather than choice. Sydney Smith, in hostility, is an overwhelming antagonist; his arguments are glittering with laughter, and well balanced with good sense; they flow onwards with the ease and certainty of a current above a bright cascade; he piles up his merriment like a grotesque mausoleum over his enemy, and so compactly and regularly that you feel no fear of its toppling over by any retort. Fonblanque seems not so much to fight "on editorial perch," as to stand with an open Code of Social Laws in one hand, and a two-edged sword in the other, waving the latter slowly to and fro with a grave face, while dictating his periods to the laughing amanuensis. As Jerrold's pleasantest works are generally covert satires, so his open satires are galling darts, or long bill-hook spears that go right through the mark, and divide it—pull it nearer for a "final eye," or thrust it over the pit's edge.

All these writers have used their wit in the cause of humanity, and honestly, according to their several views of what was best, and most needful to be done, or done away with. They have nobly used, and scarcely ever abused the dangerous, powerful, and tempting weapon of the faculty of wit. Some exceptions must be recorded. Sydney Smith has several times suffered his sense of the ridiculous to "run away" with his better feelings; and in subjects which were in themselves of a painful, serious, or shocking nature, he has allowed an absurd contingent circumstance to get the upper hand, to the injury, or discomfiture, or offence, of nature and society. Such was the fun he made of the locking people in railway-carriages upon the occasion

of the frightful catastrophe at Versailles. Fonblanque has continually boiled and sparkled round the extreme edge of the same offence; but we think he has never actually gushed over. The same may be nearly said of Jerrold, though we think he has been betrayed by that scarcely resistible good or evil genius "a new subject" into several papers which he had much better never have written. One—the worst—should be mentioned: it is the "Metaphysician and the Maid."*

No doubt can exist as to who the bad satire was meant for. This was of itself sufficiently bad in the *et tu Brute* sense; but besides the personal hit, it has graver errors. If the paper had been meant to ridicule pretended thinkers, and besotted dreamers, those who prattle about motives, and springs, and "intimate knowledge" charlatan philosophers, or even well-meaning transcendentalists "who darken knowledge;" and if it had also been intended to laugh at a man for a vulgar amour, the mistaking a mere sensuality for a sentiment, or a doll for a divinity—all were so far very well and good. The "hit" at a man desperately in love who was in the middle of an essay on "Free Will," is all fair, and fine wit. But here the sincere and earnest thinker is ridiculed;—a well-known sincere and profound thinker having been selected to stand for the class;—his private feelings are ridiculed (his being in a state of illusion as to the object, is too common to serve as excuse for the attack)—his passion for abstract truth is jested upon, and finally his generosity and unworldly disinterestedness. But the "true man's hand" misgave him in doing this deed. The irresistible "new subject" was not so strong as his own heart, and the influence of the very author he was, in this brief instance, turning into ridicule, was so full upon him that while intending to write a burlesque upon "deep thinking," he actually wrote as follows,—

"He alone, who has for months, nay years, lived upon great imaginings—whose subject hath been a part of his blood—a throb of his pulse—hath scarcely faded from his brain as he hath fallen to sleep—hath waked with him—hath, in his squalid study, glorified even poverty—hath walked with him abroad, and by its ennobling presence, raised him above the prejudice, the little spite, the studied negligence, the sturdy wrong, that in his out-door life sneer upon and elbow him—he alone, can understand the calm, deep, yet, serene joy felt by * * *

The foregoing noble and affecting passage—the cli-

* "Cakes and Ale," vol. ii., p. 175

max of which is forced into a dull and laboured absurdity—is more than a parody, it is an unintentional imitation derived from some dim association with the well-known passage of Hazlitt's, commencing with—"There are moments in the life of a solitary thinker, which are to him what the evening of some great victory is to the conqueror—milder triumphs long remembered with truer and deeper delight, &c."* We leave these two passages with Mr. Jerrold for his own most serious consideration;—the original terminating with a natural climax—his own so abominably. It is probable that we could say nothing more strongly in reprehension than Mr. Jerrold will say to himself. As for the satire upon the weaknesses or follies of the strongest-minded men when in love, the "*Liber Amoris*" left nothing to be added to its running commentary of melancholy irony upon itself and its author.

It is customary in speaking of great wits, to record and enjoy their "last;" but there are, at this time, so many of Sydney Smith's "last" in the shape of remarks on the insolvent States of America, that it is difficult to choose. If, however, we were obliged to make selection for "our own private eating," we should point to the bankrupt army marching to defend their plunder, with *ære alieno* engraved upon the trumpets. For the voice of a trumpet can be made the most defying and insulting of all possible sounds, and in this instance even the very insolence of the "special pleader" is stolen—*ære alieno*, another man's *sarce*!†

Mr. Fonblanque's "last" are so regularly seen in the "*Examiner*," and there will, in all probability, have been so many of them before these pages are published, that we must leave the reader to cater for himself; and more particularly as it would be impossible to please "all parties" with tranchant political jokes upon matters of immediate interest and contest. But nothing can more forcibly prove the true value of Mr. Fonblanque's wit than the fact that all the papers collected in "*England under Seven Administrations*" were written upon passing events; that most of the events are passed, and the wit remains. A greater disadvantage no writings ever had to encounter; yet they are read with

* Hazlitt's "*Principles of Human Action*."

† It also suggests the Latin idiom of *ære alieno exire*—a new way to pay old debts.

pleasure and admiration; and, in many instances, yet but too fresh and vigorous, with improvement, and renewed wonder that certain abuses should be of so long life.

Mr. Jerrold's two "last" we may select from the "History of a Feather," and the "Folly of the Sword." In the first we shall allude to the biting satire of the Countess of Blushrose, who being extremely beautiful, was very proud and unfeeling towards the poor; but after over-dancing herself one night at a ball, she got the erysipelas which spoiled her face, and she then became an angel of benevolence who could never stir abroad without "walking in a shower of blessings." In the second we find the following remark on war and glory.

"Now look aside, and contemplate God's image with a musket. What a fine-looking thing is war! Yet, dress it as we may, dress and feather it, daub it with gold, huzza it, and sing swaggering songs about it—what is it, nine times out of ten, but Murder in uniform? Cain taking the serjeant's shilling? * * * Yet, oh man of war! at this very moment are you shrinking, withering like an aged giant. The fingers of Opinion have been busy at your plumes—you are not the feathered thing you were; and then this little tube, the goose-quill, has sent its silent shots into your huge anatomy; and the corroding INK, even whilst you look at it, and think it shines so brightly, is eating with a tooth of iron into your sword!"

Our last extract shall be from Sydney Smith's celebrated Letters to Peter Plymley, and on a subject now likely to occupy the public mind still more than at the time it was penned:—

"Our conduct to Ireland, during the whole of this war, has been that of a man who subscribes to hospitals, weeps at charity sermons, carries out broth and blankets to beggars, and then comes home and beats his wife and children. We had compassion for the victims of all other oppression and injustice, except our own. If Switzerland was threatened, away went a Treasury Clerk with a hundred thousand pounds for Switzerland; large bags of money were kept constantly under sailing orders; upon the slightest demonstration towards Naples, down went Sir William Hamilton upon his knees, and begged for the love of St. Januarius they would help us off with a little money; all the arts of Machiavel were resorted to, to persuade Europe to borrow troops were sent off in all directions to save the Catholic and Protestant world; the Pope himself was guarded by a regiment of English dragoons; if the Grand Lama had been at hand, he would have had another; every Catholic Clergyman, who had the good fortune to be neither English nor Irish, was immediately provided with lodging, soup, crucifix, missal, chapel-beads, relics, and holy water; if Turks had landed, Turks would have received an order from the Treasury for coffee, opium, korans, and seraglios. In the midst of all this fury of saving and defending, this crusade of conscience and Christianity, there was an universal agreement among all descriptions of people to continue every species of internal persecution: to deny at home every just right that had been denied before; to pummel poor Dr. Abraham Rees and his Dissenters; and to treat the unhappy Catholics of Ireland as if their tongues were mute, their heels cloven, their nature brutal, and designedly subjected by Providence to their Orange masters.

"How would my admirable brother, the Rev. Abraham Plymley, like to be marched to a Catholic chapel, to be sprinkled with the sanctified contents of a pump, to hear a number of false quantities in the Latin tongue, and to see a number of persons occupied in making right angles upon the breast and forehead? And if all this would give you so much pain, what right have you to march Catholic soldiers to a place of worship, where there is *no* aspersion, *no* rectangular gestures, and *where they understand every word they hear*, having first, in order to get him to enlist, made a solemn promise to the contrary? Can you wonder, after this, that the Catholic priest stops the recruiting in Ireland, as he is now doing to a most alarming degree?"

The influence of these three writers has been extensive, and vigorously beneficial—placing their politics out of the question. Their aqua fortis and "laughing gas" have exercised alike a purificatory office; their championship has been strong on the side of social ameliorations and happy progress. The deep importance of national education on a proper system has been finely advocated by each in his peculiar way—Sydney Smith by excessive ridicule of the old and present system; Fonblanque by administering a moral cane and caustic to certain pastors and masters and ignorant pedagogues of all kinds; and Jerrold by such tales as the "*Lives of Brown, Jones, and Robinson*," (in vol. ii. of "*Cakes and Ale*,") and by various essays. If in the conflict of parties the Rev. Sydney Smith and Mr. Fonblanque have once or twice been sharply handled, they might reasonably have expected much worse. As for vague accusations of levity and burlesque, and want of "a well-regulated mind," and trifling and folly, those things are always said of all such men. It is observable that very dull men and men incapable of wit—either in themselves, or of the comprehension of it in others—invariably call every witty man, and every witty saying, which is not quite agreeable to themselves, by the term *flippant*. Let the wits and humourists be consoled; they have the best of it, and the dull ones know it.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH AND LEIGH HUNT.

"I judge him for a rectified spirit,
By many revolutions of discourse,
(In his bright reason's influence) refined
From all the tartarous moods of common men ;
Bearing the nature and similitude
Of a right heavenly body ; most severe
In fashion and collection of himself ;
And, then, as clear and confident as Jove."—BEN JONSON.

"You will see H—t ; one of those happy souls
Which are the salt o' the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is—a tomb."—SHELLEY.

"Most debonnaire, in courtesy supreme ;
Loved of the mean, and honoured by the great ;
Ne'er dashed by Fortune, nor cast down by Fate ;
To present and to after times a theme."—DRUMMOND.

THESE two laurelled veterans, whose lives are clad with the eternal youth of poesy, have been so long before the public, and their different and contrasted claims may be thought to have been so thoroughly settled, that it will, perhaps, as a first impression, be considered that there was no necessity for including them in this work. They are, however, introduced as highly important connecting links between past and present periods ; as the outlivers of many storms ; the originators of many opinions and tastes ; the sufferers of odium, partly for their virtues, and in some respects for their perversities ; and the long wounded but finally victorious experiencers of popular changes of mind during many years. If, therefore, it should still be thought that nothing very new remains to be said of them, it is submitted that at least there are some truths concerning both, which have never yet been fairly brought into public notice.

When Mr. Wordsworth first stood before the world as a poet, he might as well, for the sorriest of his reception, have stood before the world as a prophet. In some such position, perhaps, it may be said he actually did stand ; and he had prophet's fare in a shower of stones. For several generations, had the cadences of our poets (so called) moved to them along the ends of their fingers. Their language had assumed a conven-

tional elegance, spreading smoothly into pleonasms or clipped nicely into elisions. The point of an antithesis had kept perpetual sentry upon the 'final pause;' and while a spurious imagination made a Name stand as a personification, Observation only looked out of window ("with extensive view," indeed . . . "from China to Peru!") and refused very positively to take a step out of doors. A long and dreary decline of poetry it was, from the high-rolling sea of Dryden, or before Dryden, when Waller first began to "improve" (*bona verba*!) our versification—down to the time of Wordsworth. Milton's far-off voice, in the meantime, was a trumpet, which the singing birds could not take a note from: his genius was a lone island in a remote sea, and singularly uninfluential on his contemporaries and immediate successors. The decline sloped on. And that edition of the poets which was edited by Dr. Johnson for popular uses, and in which he and his publishers did advisedly obliterate from the chronicles of the people, every poet before Cowley, and force the Chaucers, Spencers, and Draytons to give place to "Pomfret's Choice" and the "Art of Cookery,"—is a curious proof of poetical and critical degradation. "Every child is graceful," observes Sir Joshua Reynolds, with a certain amount of truth, "until he has learnt to dance." We had learned to dance with a vengeance—we could not move except we danced—the French school pirouetted in us most anti-nationally. The age of Shakspeare and our great ancestral writers had grown to be rococo—they were men of genius and deficient in 'taste,' but *we* were wits and classics—we exceeded in civilization, and wore wigs. It was not, however, to end so.

Looking back to the experiences of nations, a national literature is seldom observed to recover its voice after an absolute declension; the scattered gleaners may be singing in the stubble, but the great song of the harvest sounds but once. Into the philosophy of this fact it would take too much space to enquire. That genius comes as a periodical effluence, and in dependence on unmanifest causes, is the confession of grave thinkers, rather than fanciful speculators; and perhaps if the Roman empire, for instance, could have endured in strength, and held its mighty breath until the next tide, some Latin writer would have emerged from the onward flood of inspiration which was bearing Dante to

the world's wide shores. Unlike Dante, indeed, would have been that writer—for no author, however influential on his contemporaries, can be perfectly independent himself of their influences—but he would have been a Latin writer, and his hexameters worth waiting for. And England did not wait in vain for a *new* effluence of genius—it came at last like the morning—a pale light in the sky, an awakening bird, and a sunburst—we had Cowper—we had Burns—that lark of the new grey dawn; and presently the early-risers of the land could see to spell slowly out the name of William Wordsworth. They saw and read it clearly with those of Coleridge and Leigh Hunt,—and subsequently of Shelley and Keats, notwithstanding the dazzling beams of lurid power which were in full radiation from the engrossing name of Byron.

Mr. Wordsworth began his day with a dignity and determination of purpose, which might well have startled the public and all its small poets and critics, his natural enemies. He laid down fixed principles in his prefaces, and carried them out with rigid boldness, in his poems; and when the world laughed, he bore it well, for his logic apprized him of what should follow: nor was he without the sympathy of Coleridge and a few other first-rate intellects. With a severe hand he tore away from his art the encumbering artifices of his predecessors; and he walked upon the pride of criticism with greater pride. No toleration would he extend to the worst laws of a false critical code; nor any conciliation to the critics who had enforced them. He was a poet, and capable of poetry, he thought, only as he was a man and faithful to his humanity. He would not separate poetry and nature, even in their forms. Instead of being “classical” and a “wit,” he would be a poet and a man, and “like a man,” (notwithstanding certain weak moments) he spoke out bravely, in language free of the current phraseology and denuded of conventional adornments, the thought which was in him. And the thought and the word witnessed to that verity of nature, which is eternal with variety. He laid his hand upon the Pegasean mane, and testified that it was not floss silk. He testified that the ground was not all lawn or bowling-green; and that the forest trees were not clipped upon a pattern. He scorned to be contented with a tradition of beauty, or with an abstraction of the beautiful. He

refused to work, as others had done, like those sculptors, who make all their noses in the fashion of that of the Medicæan Venus ; until no one has his own nose ; nature being "cut to order." William Wordsworth would accept no type for nature : he would take no leap at the generalization of the natural ; and the brown moss upon the pale should be as sacred to him and acceptable to his song, as the pine-clothed mountain. He is a poet of detail, and sings of what is closest to his eye ; as small starting points for far views, deep sentiment, and comprehensive speculation. "The meanest flower that blows" is not too mean for him ; exactly because "thoughts too deep for tears" lie for him in the mystery of its meanness. He has proved this honour on the universe ; that in its meanest natural thing is no vulgarism, unconveyed by the artificiality of human manners. That such a principle should lead to some puerilities at the outset, was not surprising.

A minute observer of exterior nature, his humanity seems nevertheless to stand between it and him ; and he confounds those two lives—not that he loses himself in the contemplation of things, but that he absorbs them in himself, and renders them Wordsworthian. They are not what he wishes, until he has brought them home to his own heart. Chaucer and Burns made the most of a daisy, but left it still a daisy ; Mr. Wordsworth leaves it transformed into *his* thoughts. This is the sublime of egotism, disinterested as extreme. It is on the entity of the man Wordsworth, that the vapour creeps along the hill—and "the mountains are a feeling." To use the language of the German schools, he makes a subjectivity of his objectivity. Beyond the habits and purposes of his individuality, he cannot carry his sympathies ; and of all powerful writers, he is the least dramatic. Another reason, however, for his dramatic inaptitude, is his deficiency in passion. He is passionate in his will and reason, but not in his senses and affections ; and perhaps scarcely in his fancy and imagination. He has written, however, one of the noblest odes in the English language, in his "Recollections of Childhood;" and his chief poem, "The Excursion," which is only a portion of a larger work (to be published hereafter) called "The Recluse," has passages of very glorious exaltation. Still, he is seldom impulsive ; and his exaltation is rather the nobly-acquired habit of his

mind than the prerogative of his temperament. A great Christian moralist and teacher, he is sacerdotal both in gravity and purity; he is majestic and self-possessed. Like many other great men, he *can* be dull and prolix. If he has not written too many sonnets, it may be doubted if he has not burned too few: none are bad, it is true; but the value of the finest would be enhanced by separation from so much fatiguing good sense. They would be far more *read*. Perhaps, his gravity and moral aim are Mr. Wordsworth's most prevailing characteristics. His very cheerfulness is a smile over the altar,—a smile of benediction which no one dares return—and expressive of good will rather than sympathy.

These remarks have doubtless occurred to many students and admirers of Wordsworth; but it is more remarkable that he is what he is, not unconsciously or instinctively, as many other men of genius have developed their idiosyncrasies; but consciously, to all appearance, and determinately, and by a particular act of the will. Moreover, he is not only a self-conscious thinker and feeler; but he is conscious, apparently, of this self-consciousness.

When Mr. Wordsworth had published his "Lyrical Ballads," out swarmed the critics—with reference to the accidental gathering together in his neighbourhood of certain poets (who, although men of genius and impatient of the trammels of the scholastic rhymers, were not so "officially" reformers, nor partakers of his characteristics;)—out swarmed the critics, declaring that the Lyrical Balladmonger had a school, and that it should be called the "Lake School." It was a strange mistake, even for the craft. Here was a man reproached by themselves, with all anti-scholastic offences, a man who had made mock at the formulas, confused the classes, and turned the schoolmasters out of doors! and he must be placed in a school, forsooth, for the sake of those who could discern nothing out of the subdivisions of the schools. The critical "memoria technica" required that it should be so arranged. And, verily, when Wordsworth and his peers looked up to the sublime Lake mountains, and down to the serene Lake waters, they were probably consoled for the slang, by the dignity and holiness of this enforced association. It was otherwise in the matter of another calling of names, nearly simultaneously effected; when Leigh Hunt and

his friends were saluted in London, by that nickname of the "Cockney School," which was so incessantly repeated and applied to almost everybody who ventured to write a verse, that at length it became the manifest sign of a juvenile Cockney critic to use the term. It was presently superseded by the new nickname of "Satanic School," which, however, unlike the others, had some sort of foundation.

The Cockney School was as little-minded a catch-word of distinctive abuse as ever came from the splenetic pen of a writer "at a loss for something." The cheek of the impartial historian, as of the true critic of present times, flushes in having to recount, that Lamb, who stammered out in child-like simplicity, his wit beautiful with wisdom—that Coleridge, so full of genius and all rare acquirements—that Hazlitt, who dwelt gloriously with philosophy in a chamber of imagery—that Shelley, with his wings of golden fire—that Keats who saw divine visions, and the pure Greek ideal, because he had the essence in his soul—that Leigh Hunt (now the sole survivor of all these) true poet and exquisite essayist—and finally Alfred Tennyson—were of the writers so stigmatized! Eventually the term was used as a reproach by people who had never been out of London, and by Scotchmen who had never been out of Edinburgh—and then—that is, when this fact was discovered pretty generally—then the epithet was no more heard. But while in use, its meaning seemed to be—pastoral, minus nature; and it is a curious and striking fact, that every one of the eminent men to whom it was applied was a marked example of the very contrary characteristic. It hence would appear that the term was chiefly applicable to the men themselves who used it; because, knowing nothing of pastoral nature, they did not recognize it when placed before them, but conceived it must be a mere affectation of something beyond their own civic ideas. If the word had meant simply an exclusion, as livers in cities, from a familiarity with the country—if it had meant the acquirement of conventional views and artificial habits from this accident of place; then it suited Dr. Johnson, Pope, and his "wits about town" with tolerable propriety.

Leigh Hunt, the poet of "Foliage" and the "Story of Rimini," the author of some of the most exquisite essays in the English language, of a romance ("Sir

Ralph Esher,") full of power and beauty, and of the "Legend of Florence," a production remarkable for dramatic excellence and a pure spirit of generous and refined morality, is likely to be honoured with more love from posterity, than he ever received, or can hope to receive, from his contemporary public. Various circumstances combined to the ruffling of the world beneath his feet—and the two years of his imprisonment for libel, when he covered his prison-walls with garlands of roses, and lived, in spite of fate and the king's attorney-general, in a bower—present a type, in the smiling quaintness of their oppositions, of the bitterness and sweetness, the constraint and gay-heartedness of his whole life besides. At the very time he was thus imprisoned, his physician had ordered him much horse-exercise, his health having been greatly impaired by sedentary habits. Still, he covered the walls of his room with garlands.

On a survey of the ordinary experiences of poets, we are apt to come hastily to a conclusion, that a true poet may have quite enough tribulation by his poetry, for all good purposes of adversity, without finding it necessary to break any fresh ground of vexation:—but Leigh Hunt, imprudent in his generation, was a gallant politician, as well as a genuine poet; and, by his connection with the "Examiner" newspaper, did, in all the superfluity of a youth full of animal spirits, sow the whirlwind and reap the tornado. We have also heard of some other literary offences of thirty or forty years ago, but nobody cares to recollect them. In religious feeling, however, he has been misrepresented. It is certain that no man was ever more capable of the spirit of reverence; for God gifted him with a loving genius—with a genius to love and bless. He looks full tenderly into the face of every man, and woman, and child, and living creature; and the beautiful exterior world, even when it is in angry mood, he smoothes down softly, as in recognition of its sentiency, with a gentle caressing of the fancy—Chaucer's irrepressible "Ah, benedicite," falling for ever from his lips! There is another point of resemblance between him and several of the elder poets, who have a social joyous full-heartedness; a pathetic sweetness; a love of old stories, and of sauntering about green places; and a liking for gardens and drest nature, as well as fields and forests;

though he is not always so simple as they, in his mode of describing, but is apt to elaborate his admiration, while his elder brothers described the thing—and left it so. He presses into association with the old Elizabethan singing choir, just as the purple light from Italy and Marini had flushed their foreheads; and he is an Italian scholar himself, besides having read the Greek idyls. He has drunken deep from “the beaker full of the warm South,” and loves to sit in the sun, indolently turning and shaping a fancy “light as air,” or—and here he has never had justice done him—in brooding deeply over the welfare, the struggles, and hopes of humanity. Traces of this high companionship and these pleasant dispositions are to be found like lavender between the leaves of his books; while a fragrance native to the ground—which would be enough for the reader’s pleasure, though the lavender were shaken out—diffuses itself fresh and peculiar over all. He is an original writer: his individuality extending into mannerism, which is individuality prominent in the mode. When he says new things, he puts them strikingly; when he says old things, he puts them newly—and no intellectual and good-tempered reader will complain of this freshness, on account of a certain “knack at trifling,” in which he sometimes chooses to indulge. He does, in fact, constrain such a reader into sympathy with him—constrain him to be glad “with the spirit of joy” of which he, the poet, is possessed—and no living poet has that obvious and overflowing delight in the bare act of composition, of which this poet gives sign. ‘Composition’ is not a word for him—we might as well use it of a bird—such is the ease with which it seems to flow! Yet he is an artist and constructor also, and is known to work very hard at times before it comes out so bright, and graceful, and pretending to have cost no pains at all. He spins golden lines round and round and round, as a silk-worm in its cocoon. He is not without consciousness of art—only he is conscious less of design in it, than of pleasure and beauty. His excessive consciousness of grace in the turning of a line, and of richness in the perfecting of an image, is what some people have called “coxcombry:” and the manner of it approaches to that conscious, sidelong, swimming gait, balancing between the beautiful and the witty, which is remarkable in some elder po-

ets. His versification is sweet and various, running into Chaucer's cadences. His blank verse is the most successfully original in its freedom, of any that has appeared since the time of Beaumont and Fletcher. His images are commonly beautiful, if often fantastic—clustering like bees, or like grapes—sometimes too many for the vines—a good fault in these bare modern days. His gatherings from nature are true to nature; and we might quote passages which would disprove the old bygone charge of 'Cockneyism,' by showing that he had brought to bear an exceeding niceness of actual observation upon the exterior world. His nature, however, is seldom moor-land and mountain-land; nor is it, for the most part, English nature—we have hints of fauns and the nymphs lying hidden in the shadow of the old Italian woods; and the sky overhead is several tints too blue for home experiences. It is nature, not by tradition, like Pope's nature, nor quite by sensation and reflection, like Wordsworth's: it is nature by memory and phantasy; true, but touched with an exotic purple. His sympathies with men are wide as the distance between joy and grief: and while his laughter is audible and resistless, in pathos and depth of tender passionateness, he is no less sufficient. The tragic power of the "Story of Rimini," has scarcely been exceeded by any English poet, alive or dead; and his "Legend of Florence," is full of the 'purification of pity,' and the power of the most Christian-like manhood and sympathy. We might have fancied that the consciousness of pleasure in composition, which has been attributed to this poet, and the sense of individuality which it implies, would have interfered with the right exercise of the dramatic faculty—but the reason of tears is probably stronger in him than the consciousness of beauty. He has in him, and has displayed it occasionally, an exaltation and a sense of the divine, under a general aspect: a very noble dramatic lyric on the liberation of the soul from the body, published within the last seven years, has both those qualities, in the highest degree.

In attempting some elucidatory contrast between the poets William Wordsworth and Leigh Hunt, as one of the applications of the foregoing remarks, it is not meant that their positions as poets and teachers (and all poets must be teachers) are alike in any external

respects. We are not to forget that Mr. Wordsworth took the initiative in the great poetical movement of his times. Both, however, are poets and teachers, and both have been martyrs by distinction of persecution, and both were placed in "a school," by the critics, in a manner unsolicited and unjustified. Both are poets, but Wordsworth is so upon a scheme, and determinately; Hunt, because he could not help it, and instinctively—the first, out of the entireness of his will; the last, out of the fulness of his fancy. Both were reformers, but Hunt, like Melancthon, despising the later, and cleaving to the earlier Christians,—embraced the practice of Chaucer and of the Elizabethan men, as eagerly as a doctrine; while Wordsworth threw himself straight over all the fathers and ancestral poets, into the 'philosophia prima' of first principles. Not that Hunt rejected the first principles, nor Wordsworth the ancestral poets; but that the instinct of the former worked in him, while the ratiocination of the latter worked out of him. Both have an extraordinary consciousness—but Wordsworth has it in the determination of ends, and Hunt in the elaboration of details;—and in the first we discover the duty of the artist, and in the latter his pleasure. In exterior nature, Wordsworth has a wider faith, or a less discriminating taste. He draws her up into the embrace of his soul as he sees her, undivided and unadorned—a stick in the hedge he would take up into his song—but Hunt believes in nothing except beauty, and would throw away the stick, or cover it with a vine or woodbine. Mr. Hunt is more impressionable towards men—Wordsworth holds their humanity within his own, and teaches them out of it, and blesses them from the heights of his priestly office,—while it is enough for the other poet to weep and smile with them openly, what time he 'blesseth them unaware.' Hunt is more passionate, more tragic; and he has also a more rapid fancy, and a warmer imagination under certain aspects; but Wordsworth exceeds him in the imagination '*in intellectu.*' The imagination of the latter calls no "spirit," nor men from the vasty deep, but is almost entirely confined to the illustration of his own thoughts. The imagination of the former is habitually playful, and not disposed for sustained high exercise. William Wordsworth is a spiritual singer, a high religious singer, and none the less holy because he stands firmly still!

to reason among the tossings of the censers; while Leigh Hunt is disposed to taste the odours of each while the worship is going on. Wordsworth is habitually cold, distant, grave, inflexible; Hunt exactly the opposite in each respect. The sympathies of Leigh Hunt are universal, in philosophy and in private habits; the poetical sympathies of William Wordsworth are with primitive nature and humble life, but his personal sympathies are aristocratical. Leigh Hunt converses as well as he writes, often better, ready on every point, with deep sincerity on all serious subjects, and far in advance of his age; with a full and pleasant memory, of books, and men, and things; and with a rich sense of humour and a quick wit. Mr. Wordsworth does not converse. He announces formally at times, but he cannot find a current. He is moral, grave, good-natured, and of kindly intercourse. He does not understand a joke, but requires it to be explained; after which he looks uneasy. It is not his point. He sees nothing in it. The thing is not, and cannot be made Wordsworthian. He reads poetry very grandly, and with solemnity. Leigh Hunt also reads admirably, and with the most expressive variety of inflection, and natural emphasis. He is fond of music, and sings and accompanies himself with great expression. Mr. Wordsworth does not care much about music. He prefers to walk on the mountains in a high wind, bare-headed and alone, and listen to the far-off roar of streams, and watch the scudding clouds while he repeats his verse aloud.

Certain opinions concerning eminent men which have grown into the very fibres of the public mind, are always expected to be repeated whenever the individual is spoken of. To this there may be no great objection, provided a writer conscientiously feels the truth of those opinions. With reference, therefore, to Wordsworth, as the poet of profound sentiment, elevated humanity, and religious emotion, responding to the universe around, we respectfully accept and record the popular impression; asking permission, however, to offer a few remarks of our own for further consideration.

After the public had denied Mr. Wordsworth the possession of any of the highest faculties of the mind during twenty years, the same public has seen good of late to reward him with all the highest faculties in ex-

cess. The imagination of Wordsworth is sublime in elevation, and as the illustrator of reflection; but it is very limited. It is very deficient in invention, *see* his "Poems of the Imagination." They perfectly settle the question. The fine things which are there (in rather indifferent company) we know, and devoutly honour: but we also know what is *not* there. He has a small creative spirit; narrow, without power, and ranging over a barren field. These remarks cannot *honestly* be quoted apart from the rest of what is said of Mr. Wordsworth; such remarks, however, must be made, or the genius in question is not justly measured. He has no sustained plastic energies; no grand constructive power in general design of a continuous whole, either of subject, or of individual characters. His universality is in humanity, not in creative energies. He has no creative passion. His greatness is lofty and reflective, and his imagination turns like a zodiac upon its own centre, lit by its own internal sun. If at times it resembles the bare, dry, attenuated littleness of a school-boy's hoop, *he* may insist upon admiring this as much as his best things, but posterity will not be convinced. It is in vain to be obstinate against time; for some day the whole truth is sure to be said, and some day it is sure to be believed.

The prose writings of these distinguished poets are strikingly qualified to bring under one view these various points of contrast: and yet it must be granted, at the first glance, that Wordsworth's prose is only an exposition of the principles of his poetry, or highly valuable as an appendix to his poems; while if Leigh Hunt had never written a line as a poet, his essays would have proved him an exquisite writer, and established his claim upon posterity. As it is, he has two claims; and is not likely to be sent back for either of them, not even as the rival of Addison. The motto to his "London Journal" is highly characteristic of him—"To assist the inquiring, animate the struggling, and sympathise with *all*." The very philosophy of cheerfulness and the good humour of genius imbue all his prose papers from end to end; and if the best dreamer of us all should dream of a poet at leisure, and a scholar "in idleness," neither scholar nor poet would speak, in that air of dreamland, more graceful, wise and scholar-like fancies than are written in his books. Mr. Wordsworth

on the other hand remits nothing of his poetic austerity, when he condescends to speak prose; if anything, he is graver than ever, with an additional tone of the dictator. He teaches as from the chair, and with the gesture of a master, as he is—learnedly, wisely, sometimes eloquently, and not unseldom coldly and heavily, and with dull redundancy; but always with a self-possessed and tranquil faith in the truth which is in him, and (considering it is poet's prose) with a curious deficiency of imagery and metaphor, not as if in disdain of the adornment and illustration, but rather as being unable to ascend from the solid level without the metrical pinions.

The work that Leigh Hunt has done, may be expressed in the few words of a dedication made to him some years since.* "You have long assisted," says the dedication—"largely and most successfully—to educate the hearts and heads of both old and young; and *the extent of the service is scarcely perceptible, because the free and familiar spirit in which it has been rendered gives it the semblance of an involuntary emanation.* The spontaneous diffusion of intelligence and good feeling is not calculated, however, to force its attention upon general perception, &c." The meaning of all this is, that Leigh Hunt has no "system," and no sustained gravity of countenance, and therefore the fineness of his intellect, and the great value of his unprofessor-like teaching has been extremely underrated. The dedication also marks this disgrace to the age—which shall be as distinctly stated as such a disgrace deserves—that while the public generally takes it for granted that Mr. Leigh Hunt is on the Pension List, he most certainly is *not*, and never has been!

Both of these authors have written too much; Wordsworth from choice; Leigh Hunt less from choice than necessity. The first thinks that all he has written must be nearly of equal value, because he takes equal pains with everything; the second evidently knows the inferiority of many of his productions—"but what is a poet to do who follows literature as a profession?" Few can afford to please themselves. In this respect, however, Mr. Wordsworth is always successful.

After twenty years of public abuse and laughter, William Wordsworth is now regarded by the public of

* See "Death of Marlowe."

the same country, as the prophet of his age. And this is not a right view—after all. Wordsworth's feeling for pastoral nature, and the depths of sentiment which he can deduce from such scenes, and the lesson of humanity he can read to the heart of man, are things, in themselves, for all time ; but as the prophetic spirit is essentially that of a passionate foreseeing and annunciation of some extraneous good tidings to man ; in this sense Wordsworth is not a prophet. His sympathies, and homilies, and invocations, are devoted to the pantheistic forms of nature, and what they suggest to his own soul of glory and perpetuity ; but he does not cry aloud to mankind like a "voice in the wilderness," that the way should be "made straight," that a golden age will come, or a better age, or that the time may come when "poor humanity's afflicted will" shall *not* struggle altogether in vain with ruthless destiny. His Sonnets in favour of the punishment of Death, chiefly on the ground of not venturing to meddle with an old law, are the tomb of his prophet-title. He is a prophet of the Past. His futurity is in the eternal form of things, and the aspiration of his own soul towards the spirit of the universe ; but as for the destinies of mankind, he looks back upon them with a sigh, and thinks that as they were in the beginning, so shall they be world without end. His "future can but be the past." He dictates, he does not predict : he is a teacher and a preacher in the highest sense, but he does not image forth the 'To-Come, nor sound the trumpet of mighty changes in the horizon.

It is wonderful to see how great things are sometimes dependent upon small, not for their existence, but for their temporary effect. Anything essentially great in its mentality, will be lasting when once the world appreciates it ; the period of this commencement, however, may be retarded beyond the life of the originator, and perhaps far longer, merely by its being accompanied with some perfectly extraneous form or fancy which has caught the public ear, and caused the airy part to be mistaken for the substantial whole, the excrescence for the centre. Mr. Leigh Hunt was generally very felicitous in certain words and phrases, and admirable for reconciling the jarring discord of evil sayings and doings ; but he had half-a-dozen words and phrases which people "agreed to hate," and he would

never cease to use ; and they were also provoked at his tendency to confuse the distinctions of sympathy and antipathy, by saying too much on the amiable side of the condemned, so that, after all, mankind seemed to be wrong in definitely deciding for the right. Metaphysically, he may be correct ; but "practice drives us mad." The Fish who became wiser when changed into a Man, and again wiser when changed into a Spirit, (*see* Hunt's inimitable poem on the subject,) might have had still more knowledge to communicate if he had been put back once more to a Fish. Something very like the principle here discussed, is discoverable in Chaucer and Shakspeare, who usually give the bane and antidote in close relation, do justice to every one on all sides, and never insist upon a good thing or a bad one, but display an impartiality which often amounts to the humorous. Leigh Hunt's manner of doing this was the chief offence, for while the elder poets left the readers to their own conclusions, our author chose to take the case upon himself, so that he became identified with the provocation of those readers who were defeated of an expected decision. In Mr. Wordsworth's case there was a more deliberate and settled design in his offence. Subjects and characters seemed to be chosen, and entire poems written expressly with a view to provoke ridicule and contempt. He wrote many poems which were trivial, puerile, or mere trash. Not a doubt of it. There stand the very poems still in his works ! Anybody can see them—the ungrateful monuments of a great poet. Weakness, reared by his own hands, and kept in repair to his latest day ! Let no false pen garble these remarks, and say that the essayist calls the high-minded and true poet Wordsworth bad names, and depreciates his genius ; let the remarks of the whole be fairly taken. With this peremptory claim for justice and fair dealing on all sides, be it stated as an opinion, that poems, in which, by carrying a great principle to a ridiculous extreme, are gravely "exalted" garden-spades, common streets, small celandines, waggoners, beggars, household common-places, and matter-of-fact details, finished up like Dutch pictures and forced upon the attention as pre-eminently claiming profound admiration or reverence—that these deliberate outrages upon true taste, judgment, and the ideality of poetry, cost a great poet twenty years of abuse and laughter—during which

period thousands of people died without knowing his genius, who might otherwise have been refined and elevated, and more "fit" to die into a higher existence.

Now, however, all these small offences are merged in a public estimation, which seems likely to endure with our literature: Wordsworth is taken into the reverence of the intellect, and Leigh Hunt into the warm recesses of the affections. The one elevates with the sense of moral dignity: the other refines with a loving spirit, and instructs in smiles. And this is their influence upon the present age.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

"A haunting music, sole, perhaps, and lone
Supportress of the faery roof, in a moan
Throughout, as fearing the whole charm might fade."—KEATS

"Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aerial kisses
Of shapes that haunt thoughts' wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see what things they be ;
But from these, create he can
Forms more real than real man,—
Nursings of immortality."—SHELLEY.

THE poetic fire is one simple and intense element in human nature ; it has its source in the divine mysteries of our existence ; it develops with the first abstract delight of childhood, the first youthful aspiration towards something beyond our mortal reach ; and eventually becomes the master passion of those who are possessed with it in the highest degree, and the most ennobling and refining influence that can be exercised upon the passions of others. At times, and in various degrees, all are open to the influence of the poetic element. Its objects are palpable to the external senses, in proportion as individual perception and sensibility have been habituated to contemplate them with interest and delight ; and palpable to the imagination in proportion as an individual possesses this faculty, and has habituated it to ideal subjects and profoundly sympathetic reflections. If there be a third condition of its presence, it must be that of a certain consciousness of dreamy glories in the soul, with vague emotions, aimless impulses, and prophetic sensations, which may be said to tremble on the extreme verge of the fermenting source of that poetic fire, by which the life of humanity is purified and adorned. The first and second of these conditions must be clear to all ; the last will not receive so general an admission, and, perhaps, may not be so intelligible to everybody as could be wished. We thus arrive at the conclusion that the poetic element, though simple and

entire, has yet various forms and modifications of development according to individual nature and circumstance, and, therefore, that its loftiest or subtlest manifestations are not equally apparent to the average mass of human intelligence. He, then, who can give a form and expression to these lofty or these subtle manifestations, in a way that shall be the most intelligible to the majority, is he who best accomplishes the mission of a Poet. We are about to claim for Alfred Tennyson—living as he is, and solely on account of what he has already accomplished—the title of a true poet of the highest class of genius, and one whose writings may be considered as peculiarly lucid to all competent understandings that have cultivated a love for poetry.

It may fairly be assumed that the position of Alfred Tennyson, as a poet of fine genius, is now thoroughly established in the minds of all sincere and qualified lovers of the higher classes of poetry in this country. But what is his position in the public mind? Or, rather, to what extent is he known to the great mass of general readers? Choice and limited is the audience, we apprehend, to whom this favoured son of Apollo pours forth his melodious song. It is true, however, that the public is “a rising man” in its gradual appreciation, perhaps, of every genius of the present time; and certainly this appreciation is really on the rise with respect to the poetry of Tennyson. It is only some thirteen years since he published his first volume, and if it require all this time for “the best judges” to discover his existence, and determine “in one way, and the other,” upon some of his most original features, the public may be excused for not knowing more about his poems than they do at present. That they desire to know more is apparent from many circumstances, and partly from the fact of the last edition of his works, in two volumes, having been disposed of in a few months. Probably the edition was not large; such, however, is the result after thirteen years.

The name of Alfred Tennyson is pressing slowly, calmly, but surely,—with certain recognition but no loud shouts of greeting,—from the lips of the discerners of poets, of whom there remain a few, even in the cast-iron ages, along the lips of the less informed public, “to its own place” in the stony house of names. That it is the name of a true poet, the drowsy public exerts its

self to acknowledge; testifying with a heavy lifting of the eyelid, to its consciousness of a new light in one of the nearer sconces. This poet's public is certainly awake to him, although you would not think so. And this public's poet, standing upon the recognition of his own genius, begins to feel the ground firm beneath his feet, after no worse persecution than is comprised in those charges of affectation, quaintness, and mannerism, which were bleated down the ranks of the innocent "sillie" critics as they went one after another to water. Let the toleration be chronicled to the honor of England.* And who knows?—There may be hope from this, and a few similar instances of misprision of the high treason of poetry, that our country may conclude her grand experience of a succession of poetical writers unequalled in the modern world, by learning some ages hence to know a poet when she sees one. Certainly if we looked only to the peculiar genius of Tennyson, with the eyes of our forefathers, and some others rather nearer to our own day, we should find it absolutely worthy of being either starved or stoned, or, as Shelley said of Keats, "hooted into the grave."

A very striking remark was made in the *Times*, (December 26th, 1842), with reference to the fate and progress of true poets in the mind of the public. Alluding to "the noble fragment of 'Hyperion,'" the writer says, "Strange as it may appear, it is no less certain that the half-finished works of this young, miseducated, and unripe genius, have had the greatest influence on that which is now the popular poetry. In the eyes of the 'young England' of poets, as in those of Shelley—

'The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the immortals are.'

"What a text," pursues the same writer, "for a dissertation on the mutability of popular taste!" True indeed; but we must not be tempted into it at present. Objecting to the expressions of "miseducated" and "unripe," as only applicable to the errors in "Endymion" and his earlier poems; and to "half-finished" as only applicable (we believe this is correct?) to "Hyperion," there can be no sort of doubt of the influence. But there is this peculiarity attached to it, one which

* One exception, at least, should be noticed. In 1833 a philosophical criticism appeared on Tennyson, in the "Monthly Repository," written by W. J. Fox, which unhesitatingly recognized his genius.

stands alone in the history, certainly of all moral influences. It is, that he has not had a single mechanical imitator. There is an excellent reason for this. A mechanical imitation of style, or by choice of similar subjects, would not bear any resemblance to Keats; no one would recognise the intended imitation. When somebody expressed his surprise to Shelley, that Keats, who was not very conversant with the Greek language, could write so finely and classically of their gods and goddesses, Shelley replied "*He was a Greek.*" We may also refer to what Landor has said of him, in the paper headed with that gentleman's name, in a former part of this present work. The writings of Keats are saturated and instinct with the purest inspiration of poetry; his mythology is full of ideal passion; his divinities are drawn as from "the life," nay, from their inner and essential life; his enchantments and his "faery land" are exactly like the most lovely and truthful records of one who has been a dweller among them and a participator in their mysteries; and his descriptions of pastoral scenery are often as natural and simple as they are romantic, and tinged all over with ideal beauty. Admitting all the faults, errors in taste, and want of design in his earliest works, but laying our hands with full faith upon his "*Lamia*," "*Isabella*," "*The Eve of St. Agnes*," the four "*Odes*" in the same collection, and the fragment of "*Hyperion*," we unhesitatingly say that there is no poet, ancient or modern, upon whom the title of "*Divine*" can be more appropriately conferred than upon Keats. While the "*Satanic School*" was in its glory, it is no great wonder that Wordsworth should have been a constant laughing-stock, and Keats an object for contemptuous dismissal to the tomb. It must, however, be added that the marked neglect of the public towards the latter has continued down to the present day. The pure Greek wine of Keats has been set aside for the thin gruel of Kirk White. But if there be faith in the pure Ideal, and in the progress of intelligence and refinement, the ultimate recognition of Keats by the public will certainly follow that of the "*fit audience*" which he will ever continue to possess. Of all the numerous imitators of Lord Byron, not one now remains. And this may be mentioned as a quiet commentary upon his supercilious fling at the superior genius of John Keats.

How it should happen that the influencer of so many spirits of the present time should himself have been left to the ecstatic solitude of his own charmed shores and "faery lands forlorn," while those very spirits have each and all of them made some passage for themselves into the public mind, is one of those problems which neither the common fate of originators, the obduracy or caprice of the public, the clinging poison of bygone malice and depreciation, nor the want of sufficient introduction and championship on the part of living appreciators, can furnish a perfectly satisfactory solution. Such, however, is the fact at this very time.

We have said that Keats has had no imitators; of what nature, then, has been his influence upon the poetry of the present day? It has been spiritual in its ideality; it has been classical in its revivification of the forms and images of the antique, which he inspired with a new soul; it has been romantic in its spells, and dreams, and legendary associations; and it has been pastoral in its fresh gatherings from the wild forests and fields, and as little as possible from the garden, and never from the hot-house and the flower-shows. His imagination identified itself with the essences of things, poetical in themselves, and he acted as the interpreter of all this, by words which eminently possess the prerogative of expressive form and colour, and have a sense of their own by which to make themselves understood. Who shall imitate these peculiarities of genius? It is not possible. But kindred spirits will always recognize the voice from other spheres, will hail the "vision and the faculty divine," come from whom it may, will have their own inherent impulses quickened to look into their own hearts, and abroad upon nature and mankind, and to work out the purposes of their souls.

How much of the peculiar genius of Keats is visible in Alfred Tennyson, must have been apparent to all those who are familiar with their writings; and yet it is equally certain that Tennyson, so far from being an imitator of any one, is undoubtedly one of the most original poets that ever lived. Wordsworth has had many imitators, some of whom have been tolerably successful, especially in simplicity. They thought *that* was the grand secret. A few who had genuine *ideas* have

been more worthy followers of the great poet of profound sentiment. Tennyson has also had followers; but only such as have felt his spirit, nor is he likely to have any mere imitators, for the dainty trivialities and mannerism of his early productions have been abandoned, and now let those imitate who can. They must have some fine poetical elements of their own in order to be at all successful.

If a matter-of-fact philosopher, who prided himself upon the hardness of his head, and an exclusive faculty of understanding actual things, were to apply to us for the signification of the word "Poetry," we could not do better than thrust into his hand, widely opened for the expected brick, one of Alfred Tennyson's volumes. His poetry is poetry in the intense sense, and admits of no equivocal definitions. The hard-headed realist might perhaps accept Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome," as good martial music, (with the help of a little prompting from a friend of some imagination,) or Mr. Henry Taylor's "Philip van Artevelde" as excellent steady thinking; or a considerable portion even of Wordsworth's works as sound good sense, though in verse, (a great admission); but if he did not understand Tennyson's poems to be "Poetry," he would not be very likely to misunderstand them for anything else. The essence and element of them are poetry. The poetry of the matter strikes through the manner. The Art stands up in his poems, self-proclaimed, and not as any mere modification of thought and language, but the operation of a separate and definite power in the human faculties. A similar observation attaches itself to the poetry of Shelley, to the later productions of Keats, to certain poems of Coleridge. But Tennyson and Shelley, more particularly, walk in the common daylight in their "singing clothes;" they are silver-voiced when they ask for salt, and say "Good-morrow to you" in a cadence. They each have a poetical dialect; not such a one as Wordsworth deprecated when he overthrew a system; not a conventional poetical idiom, but the very reverse of it—each poet fashioning his phrases upon his own individuality; and speaking as if he were making a language then, for the first time, under those 'purple eyes' of the muse, which tinted every syllable as it was uttered, with a separate benediction.

Perhaps the first spell cast by Mr. Tennyson, the

master of many spells, he cast upon the ear. His power as a lyrical versifier is remarkable. The measures flow softly or roll nobly to his pen; as well one as the other. He can gather up his strength, like a serpent, in the gleaming coil of a line; or dart it out straight and free. Nay, he will write you a poem with nothing in it except music, and as if its music were everything, it shall charm your soul. Be this said, not in reproach,—but in honour of him and of the English language, for the learned sweetness of his numbers. The Italian lyrists may take counsel, or at once enjoy,

‘Where Claribel low lieth.’

But if sweetness of melody, and richness of harmony be the most exquisitely sensuous of Tennyson's characteristics, he is no less able to “pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone,” for certainly his works are equally characterized by their thoughtful grace, depth of sentiment, and ideal beauty. And he not only has the most musical words at his command (without having recourse to exotic terminologies), but he possesses the power of conveying a sense of colour, and a precision of outline by means of words, to an extraordinary degree. In music and colour he was equalled by Shelley, but in *form*, clearly defined, with no apparent effort, and no harsh shades or lines, Tennyson stands unrivalled.

His ideality is both adornative and creative, although up to this period it is ostensibly rather the former than the latter. His ideal faculty is either satisfied with an exquisitely delicate Arabesque painting, or clears the ground before him so as to melt and disperse all other objects into a suitable atmosphere, or aerial perspective, while he takes horse on a passionate impulse, as in some of his ballads which seem to have been panted through without a single pause. This is the case in “Oriana,” in “Locksley Hall,” in “The Sisters,” &c. Or, at other times, selecting some ancient theme, he stands collected and self-contained, and rolls out with an impressive sense of dignity, orb after orb of that grand melancholy music of blank verse which leaves long vibrations in the reader's memory; as in “Ulysses,” the divine “Ænone,” or the “Morte D'Arthur.” The idea of the death, or fading away of Fairy-land, allegorically conveyed in the latter poem, is apparently the main basis of the design, and probably original; but it

is observable that Tennyson scarcely ever invents any elaborate design of moving characters. The two other poems just named, with the "Lord of Burleigh," "Lady Clare," "Dora," "Godiva," and most of those which contain human character in a progressive story, are taken from various sources; but they are taken by a master hand, and infused with new life and beauty, new thought and emotion. The same peculiarity as to ground-plot is observable in Shakspeare and Chaucer, who never invented their subjects or stories; but filled them up as nobody else ever had done, or could do. It was exactly the converse with Scott, who invented nearly all his stories, but borrowed materials to fill them up from all possible sources. Tennyson does not appear to possess much inventive construction. He has burnt his epic, or this would have settled the question. We would almost venture to predict that he will never write another; nor a five-act tragedy, nor a long heroic poem. Why should he?

Alfred Tennyson may be considered generally under four different aspects,—developed separately or in collective harmony, according to the nature of his subject—that is to say, as a poet of fairy-land and enchantment; as a poet of profound sentiment in the affections (as Wordsworth is of the intellect and moral feelings); as a painter of pastoral nature; and as the delineator and representer of tragic emotions, chiefly with reference to one particular passion.

With regard to the first of these aspects of his genius, it may be admitted at the outset that Tennyson is not the portrayer of individual, nor of active practical character. His characters, with few exceptions, are generalizations, or refined abstractions, clearly developing certain thoughts, feelings, and forms, and bringing them home to all competent sympathies. This is almost exclusively the case in the first volume, published in 1830. Those critics, therefore, who have seized upon the poet's early loves—his Claribels, Lilians, Adelines, Madelines—and comparing them with real women, and the lady-loves of the actual world, have declared that they were not natural beings of flesh and blood, have tried them by a false standard. They do not belong to the flesh-and-blood class. There is no such substance in them. They are creatures of the elements of poetry. And, for that reason, they have a sensuous life of their

own ; as far removed from ordinary bodily condition as from pure spirit. They are transcendentalisms of the senses ; examples of the Homeric *ειδωλα*, or rather—if we may venture to trace the genealogical history of such fragile creatures—the descendants of those *ειδωλα*, as modified by the influence of the romantic ages. Standing or seated, flying or floating, laughing or weeping, sighing or singing, pouting or kissing, they are lovely underbodies, which no German critic would for a moment hesitate to take to his visionary arms ; but we are such a people for “beef.” We cry aloud for soul—we want more soul—we want to be inspired—and the instant anything is floated before our ken which might serve as an aerial guide to the Elysian Valley, or the Temple of the Spirit, then we instantly begin to utter the war-cry of “dreamy folly !” “mystical mystery !” and urged by the faith (the beef) that is in us, continue our lowing for the calf, that surely cometh, but cannot satisfy our better cravings.

Continuing our inquiries into the fruits of Tennyson’s early excursions in dream-land, we perceive that he was inclined, even when upon commoner ground, to accept the fantasy of things for the things themselves. His Muse was his own Lady of Shalott,—she was metamorphosed into the Merman and the Mermaid, and reuniting at the bottom of the sea, lay swelling with the sense of ages beneath enormous growths upon the surface, in the form of the Kraken. Why this latter poem should have been omitted in the present collection puzzles and annoys us as much as his insertion of “the Goose,” and one or two other such things. But nothing in this class of subjects is more remarkable than the power he possesses of communicating to simple incidents and objects of reality, a preternatural spirit as part of the enchantment of the scene. Of this kind, in the dim and desolate chamber of the moated grange, where Mariana, in the anguish of mingled hope and despair, moaned away her dreary life—of this kind, to her morbid fancy, was the blue fly that “sung i’ the pane ;” and the mouse that “behind the mouldering wainscot shrieked.” We have heard it asked—as such questions always are asked by numbers—what more there was in this than the mere details of a description of squalidness and desertion ? The best answer was recently made by * * * “Why,” said he, “don’t you know that

this ghastly fly had been bred of a corpse—and knew it? As for the mouse, it had clearly been the poor starved niece of a witch, and the witch had murdered her, her soul passing into the body of a mouse by reason of foul relationship.” This, at least, was accepting a suggestion at full. In such a spirit of imaginative promptitude and coincidence should such things be read, or nothing will come of the reading.

“ Old faces glimmer’d through the doors,
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
Old voices called her from without !”

But since “the low sky raining” in the autumn eve, when the white-robed dying form of the Lady of Shalott floated in the boat towards the many-towered palaces of the Knights, a marked change has come over the genius of this poet with regard to his female characters. Instead of the scions of the fairy race, most of whom seem to have been the poet’s “cousin”—a consanguinity which evidently haunts him—we had in the volume of 1832, some equally beautiful women, such as the “Miller’s Daughter,” “Margaret,” and the proud “Lady Clara Vere de Vere;” while in the volume last given to the public, there are several more, and not a single additional sylph. Here we find him not only awake to the actual world, but awake with a set of totally new experiences. In no writer is the calm intensity of pure affection, both in its extreme tenderness and continuity, more exquisitely portrayed than in the poems of the “Miller’s Daughter,” “Dora,” and the “Gardener’s Daughter.” They are steeped in the very sweetest fountains of the human heart.

In the description of pastoral nature in England, no one has ever surpassed Tennyson. The union of fidelity to nature and extreme beauty is scarcely to be found in an equal degree in any other writer. There may sometimes be a tone of colour, and the sense of a sustained warmth in the temperature, which is rather Italian; and this is a peculiarity of our poets, who invariably evade notice or consciousness of the four seasons in each day, which is a characteristic of our climate. The version which all English poets give of “Spring,” more especially, is directly at variance with what everybody feels and knows of that bitter season in this country. But allowing for this determination to make the best of what we have, no poet more closely adheres to nature.

He is generally as sweet, and fresh, and faithful in his drawing and colouring of a landscape, as the prose pastorals of Miss Mitford, which is saying the utmost we can for a possessor of those qualifications. But besides this, Tennyson idealises, as a poet should, wherever his subject needs it—not so much as Shelley and Keats, but as much as the occasion will bear, without undue preponderance, or interfering with the harmony of his general design. His landscapes often have the truthful ideality of Claude, combined with the refined reality of Calcott, or the homely richness of Gainsborough. The landscape painting of Keats was more like the back grounds of Titian and Annibal Carracci; as that of Shelley often resembled the pictures of Turner. We think the extraordinary power of language in Shelley sometimes even accomplished, not only the wild brilliancy of colouring, but the apparently impossible effect, by words, of the wonderful aerial perspective of Turner—as where he speaks of the loftiest star of heaven “pinnacled dim in the intense inane.” But with Tennyson there is no tendency to inventiveness in his descriptions of scenery; he contents himself with the loveliness of the truth seen through the medium of such emotion as belongs to the subject he has in hand. But as these emotions are often of profound passion, sentiment, reflection, or tenderness, it may well be conceived that his painting is of that kind which is least common in art. The opening of “*Ænone*” is a good example, and is a fine prelude to love’s delirium, which follows it.

“There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
 Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
 The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
 Puts forth an arm and creeps from pine to pine,
 And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
 The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
 Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
 The long brook falling thro’ the clov’n ravine
 In cataract after cataract to the sea.”

If Alfred Tennyson became awake to the actual world in his second volume of 1832, his publication in 1843 showed him more completely so; awake after the storm, after the wrecks, the deepest experiences of life. In the ten years’ interval he has known and suffered. So far from any of his private personal feelings being paraded before the public, either directly, or by means of characters which everybody shall recognize as identical,

after the fashion of Lord Byron, there is a withdrawal from every identification, and generally a veil of ideality cast over the whole. Certainly Tennyson is not at all dramatic. That he can be intensely tragic, in pure emotion and deep passion of expression, we shall presently show ; that he has great power of concentration, will be equally apparent ; and that in his powerful monodrama of " St. Simeon Stylites," and in the various imaginative or fanciful personages he introduces, he presents full evidence of the faculty of self-absorption in the identity of other idiosyncrasies, we think also to be incontestable. Still, he only selects a peculiar class of characters—those in whom it shall not be requisite to dispossess himself of beauty (Stylites being the only exception) ; nor can he speak without singing. His style of blank verse is elegiac, epic, heroic, or suited to the idyl ; and not at all dramatic. His characters, as we have said before, are generalizations or abstractions ; they pass before the imagination, and often into the very centre of the heart and all its emotions ; they do not stand forth conspicuous in bone or muscle, nor in solidity, nor roundness, nor substantial identity. They have no little incidental touches of character, and we should not know them if we met them out of his poetry. They do not eat and drink, and sneeze. One never thought of that before ; and it seems an offence to hint at such a thing concerning them. But besides all this, our poet cannot laugh outright in his verses ; not joyously, and with self-abandonment. His comic, grotesque, or burlesque pieces, are neither natural nor wild. They are absolute failures by dint of ingenuity. His " Amphion" and " the Goose" have everything but that which such attempts most need—animal spirits. There is something intermediate, however, which he can do, and which is ten thousand times more uncommon,—that of an harmonious blending of the poetical and familiar, so that the latter shall neither destroy the former, nor vex the taste of the reader. As an instance of this, we would quote " Will Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue," which is perfection ; as also were Shelley's poetical " Letter to —," and his " Julian and Maddalo." Of the constructive power, and the distribution of action required in a dramatic composition, there is no need to speak ; but it is time to consider the tragic faculties of our author, and his power over the passions by description.

The frequent tendency to the development or illustration of tragic emotion has been less noticed than any other important feature of Tennyson's poetry. In his first volume (1830) we find a "Dirge;" the "Death of Love;" the "Ballad of Oriana;" the "Supposed Confession;" and "Mariana;" all of which are full of the emotions and thoughts which lead directly, if they do not involve, tragic results. The same may be said of the following poems in the second volume (1832):—the "Lady of Shalott;" "Eleanore;" "Sappho" (called "Fatima" in the new edition!); "Ænone;" the "New Year's Eve;" and the "Sisters." Upon this last-named poem we will venture a few remarks and suggestions.

"The Sisters" is a ballad poem of six stanzas, each of only four lines, with two lines of a chorus sung by the changeful roaring of the wind "in turret and tree"—which is made to appear conscious of the passions that are at work. In this brief space is comprised, fully told, and with many suggestions beyond, a deep tragedy.

The story is briefly this. A youthful earl of great personal attractions seduces a young lady of family, deserts her, and she dies. Her sister, probably an elder sister, and not of equal beauty, had, apparently, also loved the earl. When, therefore, she found that not only had her love been in vain, but her self-sacrifice in favour of her sister had only led to the misery and degradation of the latter, she resolved on the earl's destruction. She exerted herself to the utmost to attract his regard; she "hated him with the hate of hell," but, it is added, that she "loved his beauty passing well," for the earl "was fair to see." Abandoning herself in every way to the accomplishment of her purpose, she finally lulled him to sleep, with his head in her lap, and then stabbed him "through and through." She composed and smoothed the curls upon "his comely head," admiring to see that "he looked so grand when he was dead;" and wrapping him in a winding-sheet, she carried him to his proud ancestral hall, and "laid him at his mother's feet."

We have no space to enter into any psychological examination of the peculiar character of this sister; with regard, however, to her actions, the view that seems most feasible, and the most poetical, if not equally tragic, is that she did not actually commit the self-

abandonment and murder; but went mad on the death of her sister, and imagined in her delirium all that has been related. But "read the part" how we may, there never was a deeper thing told in briefer words.

The third volume of "Tennyson's Poems," (that is, the Vol. II. of the new edition last issued), contains several tragic subjects. The one most penetrating to the heart, the most continuous, and most persevered in with passionate intensity, so that it becomes ineradicable from the sensibility and the memory, is "Locksley Hall." The story is very simple; not narrative, but told by the soliloquy of anguish poured out by a young man amid the hollow weed-grown courts of a ruined mansion. He loved passionately; his love was returned; and the girl married another,—a dull, every-day sort of husband. The story is a familiar one in the world—too familiar; but in Tennyson's hands it becomes invested with yet deeper life, a vitality of hopeless desolation. The sufferer invoking his betrayer, her beauty and her falsehood, by the memory of their former happiness, says that such a memory is the very crown of sorrow:—

"Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof.

Like a dog he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken sleep,
To thy widowed marriage-pillow, to the tears that thou shalt weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never! never!" whispered by the phantom years,
And a song from out the distance, in the ringing of thine ears;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy pain.

* * * * *

Of similar character and depth of tone is the poem of "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," who impelled to suicide one of the victims of her heartless beauty. The long-drawn music of her very name is suggestive of the proud pedigree to which she was ready to offer up any sacrifice. For continuity of affectionate tenderness and deep pathos in the closing scene, we should mention "The Lord of Burleigh," and the idyl of "Dora,"—the style of both being studiously artless, the latter, indeed, having a Scriptural simplicity which presents a curious contrast to the poet's early manner. In the poem of

"Love and Duty" there is a general tone of suppressed emotion, and violent effort against nature which is deeply painful. The equal tenderness and bitterness of the anguish renders it the more difficult to receive with that feeling of resignation and sense of right which one would wish for on such heart-breaking occasions. It is to be feared that some conventionalities have been erected into undue tyrannies over the noblest and most impassioned impulses, although the poet, not choosing to be more explicit in his story, or its suggestions, may not have intended to illustrate any such principle. The clear course of feeling in the two preceding poems, which are equally pathetic and conclusive, will generally be preferable even to the more intensely tragic emotion of this latter one.

It remains to offer a remark on two or three other poems which also form the most striking features of the present collection.

With respect to "Ænone," it is an exquisitely successful attempt of the poet to infuse his own beating heart's blood into the pale blind statues of the antique times: and loses no jot of the majesty, while the vitality informs the grace. It is not surpassed by anything of the kind in Keats, or Shelley, or Landor. The "Morte D'Arthur" precisely reverses the design of the Greek revival; and, with equal success, draws back the Homeric blood and spirit to inspire a romantic legend.

Of the "Ulysses" we would say that the mild dignity and placid resolve—the steady wisdom after the storms of life, and with the prospect of future storms—the melancholy fortitude, yet kingly resignation to his destiny which gives him a restless passion for wandering—the unaffected and unostentatious modesty and self-conscious power—the long softened shadows of memory cast from the remote vistas of practical knowledge and experience, with a suffusing tone of ideality breathing over the whole, and giving a saddened charm even to the suggestion of a watery grave—all this, and much more, independent of the beautiful picturesqueness of the scenery, render the poem of "Ulysses" one of the most exquisite (as it has hitherto been one of the least noticed) poems in the language.

It would be impossible to give that full consideration to the extraordinary poem of "St. Simeon Stylites," which as a work of genius it merits, without entering

into complexities of the passions, mind, and human character, under the excitement and involuntary as well as wilful hallucinations of fanaticism, for which we could afford no adequate space. We must content ourselves with saying that it is a great and original "study."

There are no qualities in Tennyson more characteristic than those of delicacy and refinement. How very few are the poets who could equally well have dealt with the dangerous loveliness of the story of "Godiva."

"Then fled she to her inmost bower, and there
Unclasped the wedded eagles of her belt,
The grim Earl's gift; but ever at a breath
She lingered, looking like a summer moon
Half-dipt in cloud: anon she shook her head,
And showered the rippled ringlets to her knee;
Unclad herself in haste; adown the stair
Stole on; and like a creeping sunbeam, slid
From pillar unto pillar, until she reached
The gateway, &c."

The mind which can force up a vital flower of ideality through the heavy fermenting earth of human experiences, must have a deep intellectual root and active life. Among these experiences we must of course include those inner struggles of the soul with its own thoughts; dealings with the revelations that seem to come from other states of existence; difficult contests between the mortal promptings and resistances that breed so many doubts and hopes, and things inscrutable; and thoughts that often present themselves in appalling whispers, against the will and general tone and current of the mind. Tennyson's intellectual habit is of great strength; his thoughts can grow with large progressive purpose either up or down, and the peculiarity is that in him they commonly do so to "a haunting music." No argument was ever conducted in verse with more admirable power and clearness than that of the "Two Voices." The very poetry of it magnifies itself into a share of the demonstration: take away the poetry and the music, and you essentially diminish the logic.

Though Tennyson often writes, or rather sings apparently from his own personality, you generally find that he does not refer to himself, but to some imaginary person. He permits the reader to behold the workings of his individuality, only by its reflex action. He comes out of himself to sing a poem, and goes back again; or rather sends his song out from his shadow under the leaf, as other nightingales do; and refuses to be expan-

sive to his public, opening his heart on the hinges of music, as other poets do. We know nothing of him except that he is a poet ; and this, although it is something to be sure of, does not help us to pronounce distinctly upon what may be called the mental intention of his poetry.

Whatever he writes is a complete work : he holds the unity of it as firmly in his hand as his *Ænone's* Paris holds the apple—and there is nothing broken or incomplete in his two full volumes. His few “fragments” are entire in themselves, and suggest the remainder. But for all this unity of every separate poem produced by him, there is, or appears to be, some vacillation of intention, in his poetry as a mass. To any question upon the character of his early works, the reply rises obviously—they are from dream-land ; and of the majority of those which he has since produced, the same answer should be returned. The exceptive instances are like those of one who has not long awakened from his Dreams. But what dreams these have been—of what loveliness of music, form, and colour, and what thoughtfulness—our foregoing remarks have very faintly expressed and declared. In the absence of any marked and perceptible design in his poetical faith and purposes, Tennyson is not singular. It would be equally difficult to decide the same question with regard to several others ; nor perhaps is it necessary to be decided. As the matter rests in this instance, we have the idea of a poet (his volumes in our hands) who is not in a fixed attitude ; not resolute as to means, not determined as to end—sure of his power, sure of his activity, but not sure of his objects. There appears to be some want of the sanctification of a spiritual consistency ; or a liability at intervals to resign himself to the “*Lotos Eaters*.” We seem to look on while a man stands in preparation for some loftier course—while he tries the edge of his various arms and examines the wheels of his chariots, and meditates, full of youth and capability, down the long slope of glory. He constantly gives us the impression of something greater than his works. And this must be his own soul. He may do greater things than he has yet done ; but we do not expect it. If he do no more, he has already done enough to deserve the lasting love and admiration of posterity.

Alfred Tennyson is the son of a clergyman of Lin-

colnshire. He went through the usual routine of a University education at Trinity College, Cambridge. He has brothers and sisters living, who are all possessed of superior attainments. Avoiding general society, he would prefer to sit up all night talking with a friend, or else to sit "and think alone." Beyond a very small circle he is never to be met. There is nothing eventful in his biography, of a kind which would interest the public ; and wishing to respect the retirement he unaffectedly desires, we close the present paper.

T. B. MACAULAY.

"Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
And from the lore of bards and sages old,
From whatsoe'er my wakened thoughts create,
* * * * *

Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen."—SHELLEY.

"Arma, virumque, &c."—VIRGIL.

"And in triumphant chair was set on high
The ancient glorie of the Roman peers."—SPENSER.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY is the son of Zachary Macaulay, well known as the friend of Wilberforce, and, though himself an African merchant, one of the most ardent abolitionists of slavery. In 1818, T. B. Macaulay became a member of Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took his Bachelor's degree in 1822. He distinguished himself as a student, having obtained a scholarship, twice gained the Chancellor's medal for English verse, and also gained the second Craven Scholarship, the highest honour in classics which the University confers. Owing to his dislike of mathematics, he did not compete for honours at graduation, but nevertheless he obtained a Fellowship at the October competition open to graduates of Trinity, which he appears to have resigned before his subsequent departure for India. He devoted much of his time to the "Union" debating Society, where he was reckoned an eloquent speaker.

Mr. Macaulay studied at Lincoln's Inn, and was called to the bar in 1826. In the same year his "Essay on Milton" appeared in the "Edinburgh Review:" and out of Lord (then Mr.) Jeffrey's admiration of that paper, arose an intimate friendship. Macaulay, visiting Scotland soon afterwards, went the circuit with Mr. Jeffrey. His connection with the "Edinburgh Review" has continued at intervals ever since.

By the Whig administration Mr. Macaulay was appointed Commissioner of Bankrupts. He commenced his parliamentary career about the same period, as

member for Colne in the Reform Parliament of 1832, and again for Leeds in 1834, at which time he was secretary to the India Board. His seat was, however, soon relinquished, for in the same year he was appointed member of the Supreme Council in Calcutta, under the East India Company's new charter.

Arriving in Calcutta, in September, 1834, Mr. Macaulay shortly assumed an important trust in addition to his seat at the Council. At the request of the Governor General, Lord William Bentinck, he became President of the commission of five, appointed to frame a penal code for India; and the principal provisions of this code have been attributed to him. One of its enactments, in particular, was so unpopular among the English inhabitants, as to receive the appellation of the "Black Act." It abolished the right of appeal from the Local Courts to the Supreme Court at the Presidency, hitherto exclusively enjoyed by Europeans, and put them on the same footing with natives, giving to both an equal right of appeal to the highest Provincial Courts. Inconvenience and delay of justice had been caused by the original practice, even when India was closed against Europeans in general, but such practice was obviously incompatible with the rights and property of the natives under the new system of opening the country to general resort. This measure of equal justice, however, exposed Mr. Macaulay, to whom it was universally attributed, to outrageous personal attacks in letters, pamphlets, and at public meetings.

The various reforms and changes instituted by Lord W. Bentinck and Lord Auckland, were advocated in general by Mr. Macaulay. He returned to England in 1838.

Mr. Macaulay was elected member for Edinburgh on the liberal interest in 1839; and being appointed Secretary at War, he was re-elected the following year, and again at the general election in 1841. No review of his political career is here intended; although in relation to literature, it should be mentioned that he opposed Mr. Serjeant Talfourd's Copyright Bill, and was the principal agent in defeating it. As a public speaker, he usually displays extensive information, close reasoning, and eloquence; and has recently bid fair to rival the greatest names among our English orators. His conversation in private is equally brilliant and instructive.

Mr. Macaulay may fairly be regarded as the first critical and historical essayist of the time. It is not meant to be inferred that there are not other writers who display as much understanding and research, as great, perhaps greater capacity of appreciating excellence, as much acuteness and humour, and a more subtle power of exciting, or of measuring, the efforts of the intellect and the imagination, besides possessing an equal mastery of language in their own peculiar style; but there is no other writer who combines so large an amount of all those qualities, with the addition of a mastery of style, at once highly classical and most extensively popular. His style is classical, because it is so correct; and it is popular because it must be intelligible without effort to every educated understanding.

In the examination of the "Critical and Historical Essay" of Mr. Macaulay, it would have been our wish, as the most genial and agreeable proceeding, to commence with that unqualified admiration which so large a portion of his labours justly merits. But unfortunately he has written a "Preface." It scarcely occupies two pages, yet presents a stumbling-block in our course; and, in that spirit of free discussion adopted by Mr. Macaulay himself throughout his volumes, he will pardon our stating certain objections which we cannot quietly overcome in our own minds.

"The author of these Essays is so sensible of their defects, that he has repeatedly refused to let them appear in a form which might seem to indicate that he thought them worthy of a permanent place in English literature. Nor would he now give his consent to the republication of pieces so imperfect, if, by withholding his consent, he could make republication impossible. But as they have been reprinted more than once in the United States," &c
Preface.

This, therefore, being unfortunately the state of affairs, of course we expect to be told that the author has now carefully revised productions which he had been so anxious to suppress from a sense of their incompleteness.

"No attempt has made to remodel any of the pieces which are contained in these volumes. Even the criticism on Milton, which was written when the author was fresh from college, and *which contains scarcely a paragraph such as his matured judgment approves* still remains overloaded with gaudy and ungraceful ornament."—*Preface.*

Nevertheless, in this condition Mr. Macaulay reprints his Essays, now that, whether willingly or unwillingly, he sends them forth in the form which au-

thors adopt who think their works worthy of a permanent place in literature. An odd compliment, by the way, to the admiration expressed by Lord Jeffrey, of this very paper. How are we to proceed? The critical author has placed all his fraternity in a very anomalous, not to say rather grotesque position. For if we object to anything, especially in the essay on Milton, the author will have been before-hand with us—he *knew* all that himself; and if we admire anything, he may smile and say “Ah, I thought pretty well of it myself when I was a very young man.”

But these Essays have gone forth to do their work in the world, and the Essay on Milton, among the rest, will exercise its appointed degree of influence; though it “contains scarcely a paragraph such as the author’s mature judgment approves”—and, we will venture to add, contains certain positions which are very mischievous to the popular mind.

We will proceed as though no Preface had been written. Our objections shall not meddle with the style, nor do we think its redundancy of ornament so prominent an annoyance as the author intimates. Our objections are of a more serious nature; founded on confused views of truth and fiction, of reality and ideality, and leading directly to the question of whether Shakspeare and Milton ought to be regarded in any respect as lunatics.

“Perhaps no person can be a poet, or can ever enjoy poetry, without a certain *unsoundness of mind*, if anything which gives so much pleasure ought to be called unsoundness.”—*Essays*, vol. i. p. 7.

The position is guarded and qualified, in the above quotation, but presently it comes out in all its fulness. The author, be it understood, explains that he means poetry, impassioned and imaginative poetry; not mere verse-making, but poetry of the highest order. And what the world has been hitherto accustomed to regard in the light of an inspiration, the essayist wishes to teach us to consider as the product of an unsound mind. It is even catching, and those who read may rave. “The greatest of poets,” he says, “has described it in lines which are valuable on account of the just notion which they convey of the art in which he excelled:

“As imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name”

Now all this, which so palpably implies creative power, suggests to the essayist an unsound creator.

"These are the fruits of the 'fine frenzy' which he ascribes to the poet—a fine ~~frenzy~~, doubtless, but still a frenzy. Truth, indeed, is essential to poetry; but it is the truth of madness."—*Ibid.* p. 8.

Surely the young essayist must have heard of the "nor'-west madness?" But he suffered himself to be misled by the imperfect comparison with the reasonings of mad people, "which are just; but the premises are false." A few lines farther on, observing how much "a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red Riding-hood" he adds—"She knows that it is all false, that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet in spite of her knowledge she believes, she weeps, she trembles," &c. That is the point. There is no madness in the matter; those who *are* mad, do not know that their premises are false. With respect to poetry, it is no unsoundness of mind; but the surrendering up of the feelings to certain operations of the mind,—which happens in other things besides poetry, and no one thinks of calling it madness. After this, come the usual remarks about "the despotism of the imagination over *uncultivated* minds" (Greece and Rome for instance?) the "rude state of society," and the influence of poetry dwindling with the "improvements" of civilisation, but "lingering longest among the peasantry,"—all of whom are excessively addicted to Wordsworth and Shelley. Finally, "as the light of knowledge breaks in upon its exhibitions"—

"The hues and lineaments of the phantoms which the poet calls up, grow fainter and fainter. We cannot unite the incompatible advantages of reality and deception, the clear discernment of truth and the exquisite enjoyment of fiction."—*Ibid.* p. 9.

As if fiction involved no truth—no realities?—as if there were not a larger amount of truth in fiction than in any *known* reality. Moreover, we are told, and truly (in the Essay on "Moore's Life of Lord Byron," Vol. I. page 332), that "the heart of man is the province of poetry, and of poetry alone." With madness, therefore, at heart, as well as in the head, we are in a pretty condition! It could hardly have been on this account that Lord Jeffrey was so pleased with the essay. Entertaining, as we do, the most unaffected respect for the "mature judgment" of Mr. Macaulay, and a

sincere admiration of his great powers and acquirements, we must be permitted to express our regret—all the more strongly for that very respect and admiration—that he did not think fit to exercise them in revising the crude philosophy of a young gentleman “fresh from college,” instead of sending it abroad to do its work of injurious influence upon the mind of our not very *finely* frenzied public—a public of itself, by no means disposed to regard poets or their works with too much estimation, except as matter of national boasting. Once convince and fortify John Bull in the opinion that to read poetry and cultivate his imaginative faculties will render him liable to aberration of mind, and it is all over with him, and the poets. He has half suspected this for a long time: his unsoundness is already on the other side. Or does our classic Essayist and right Roman lyrist make an exception in favour of the mental soundness of Songs of the Sword—of bards and readers on war-steeds—of statesmen who write poetry in steel helmets?

In the same essay we are also obliged to object to the remark that the Prometheus of Æschylus “bears undoubtedly a considerable resemblance to the Satan of Milton,” because “in both we find the *same* impatience of control, the *same* ferocity, the *same* unconquerable pride.” At page 348 of this volume, we also find a comparison made with some of the Byronic heroes “who are sick of life, who are at war with society, who are supported in their anguish *only* by an unconquerable pride, *resembling* that of Prometheus on the rock, or of Satan in the burning marl,” &c. Here we find individual ambition and morbid dissatisfaction confounded with the loftiest sympathies—demoniac pride with the pride of the Champion of Humanity. On the other hand, we have, elsewhere*, an equal extravagance in the way of eulogium, when the “harsh, dark features of the Earl of Strafford,” are said to have been “ennobled by their expression into *more* than the majesty of an antique Jupiter,”—as though there could be any comparison between the finest practical head, and the finest ideal one, which could be fair towards either.

Let it not be supposed, however, that we do not find

* In the Essay on “Lord Nugent’s Memorials of Hampden,” vol. i. pp. 450, 1, 2, where Strafford, the same more than superhumanly majestic nobleman, is fairly shown to have been an avaricious and despotic renegade.

much to admire in the essay on Milton—hazardous as such a declaration may be, after what the author has himself said of it. Having duly deliberated, however, we will venture to express great admiration of the passages on “revolution” at pp. 39, 40, 41; (which we commend to Sir E. L. Bulwer’s especial attention) and also of the character of Cromwell, at pp. 45, 46—which we commend to the especial attention of the “authority,” who seems to be so short-sighted as to contemplate the exclusion of all pictorial recognition of the Commonwealth from the new Houses of Parliament*.

Few essays were ever sent abroad in the world more calculated to improve the public understanding, and direct its moral feelings aright, than those on “Moore’s Life of Byron,” “Machiavelli,” and “Boswell’s Life of Johnson.” They contain many passages of sterling philosophy in the analysis and elucidation of character, in principles and conditions of public and private morality, and in matters of literary taste; all of which are set forth with unanswerable arguments and admirable illustrations. Among the latter we cannot forbear noticing the equally acute and amusing remarks on the hypocritical public horror at Lord Byron’s separation from his wife, and because Edmund Kean “had disturbed the conjugal felicity of an alderman,”—common occurrences, of which the world takes no sort of notice beyond the newspaper paragraphs of the day, except about once in seven years, and then “the public decency requires a victim.” His remarks on Dr. Johnson are excellent, and while they do every justice to all the good qualities of the “great man” of his day, will materially assist in leading the public mind at last to perceive how constantly Dr. Johnson, in philosophy, in morals, and in criticism, was quite as wrong as he was pompous and overbearing.

The article on Warren Hastings is a model of biography. It is biography of the most difficult kind; that, namely, in which the character and actions of the individual subject cannot be portrayed without a comprehensive history of the times in which he lived. Such writings are apt to be exceedingly tedious, and in fact to present a mixture of two styles of composition, that of the historian and that of the biographer, fitted together as they best may be. But in the case before us,

* February the 22d.

while in the state of the political world, the progress of events, the aspects of parties, the peculiar condition of the great continent of India, the characteristics of its various races, are all presented distinctly, and held constantly before the mind as they in succession change, swell into importance, or fade into obscurity, in the onward march of time ;—so, with equal distinctness and constancy, is the individual Warren Hastings always held present to the imagination, as those events, and scenes, and characteristics acted upon him, or he acted upon them. The man stands revealed in this clear picture of his circumstances and his actions. We do not require to be told what was the peculiar nature of his intellect, his moral perceptions, his temperament. These we deduce from the history ; any occasional remark upon him in the way of metaphysical analysis we read as a corollary, and can only say, ‘just so,’ or ‘of course.’ Perhaps a skilful physiognomist might even pronounce on the features of his face after reading the whole. With the same skill as that displayed in presenting the history of his time, the men who surrounded him are brought on the scene.

Of the masterly essay on “Lord Bacon,” we must content ourselves with saying that it is in itself a great work of harmoniously united history, biography, and criticism, each of the highest class, and of which there is not a single page without its weight and value.

Mr. Macaulay possesses great powers of logical criticism ; a fine and manly taste and judgment ; a quick sense of the absurd, with an acute perception of the illogical ; great fairness, and love of truth and justice. His prose is a model of style. It is sculpturesque by its clearness, its solidity, its simplicity, without any mannerism or affectation, and by its regularity. But this regularity is not of marble equality ; the strong and compacted sentences rather presenting the appearance of a Cyclopiian wall, with the outer surface polished. Continually the matter is of similar character with this style, and a brief section contains the growth of ages. Many single sentences might be adduced, in which are compressed clearly and without crowding, the sum of prolonged historical records, their chief events and most influential men, and how the events and the men acted and re-acted upon each other.

Mr. Macaulay has great and singular ability in mak-

ing difficult questions clear, and the most unpromising subjects amusing. A good example of this may be found in his review of "Southey's Colloquies on Society," where Macaulay displays Southey's errors and wrong-headedness, and what the true state of the case is with respect to the currency, the national debt, and finance,—subjects which Literature had always considered as dry and impracticable as a rope of sand, but which in Mr. Macaulay's hands become not only intelligible and instructive, but incredibly entertaining.

Notwithstanding the many excellent remarks on poets and poetical productions, occurring in the course of his volumes—and the acuteness displayed, not only in what Mr. Macaulay says of the so-called "correctness" of Pope, and Addison, and Gray (as though their descriptions of men and external nature were not far less correct than those of the Elizabethan poets). but in the more admiring tone he occasionally takes,—it might still have been doubted whether a writer, in whom the understanding faculty predominates, would be able to make that degree of surrender of its power, which the fullest appreciation of poetry requires. He might fear it would argue "unsoundness." Howbeit, in certain remarks on Shelley, we see that he can make the requisite surrender to one, whose poetry, of all others, needs it, in order to be rightly estimated. And it is a part of the means of forming the best *judgment* of poetical productions to know when, and how far that faculty should *abandon itself*, and receive a dominant emotion as fresh material for subsequent judgment.

The last publication of Mr. Macaulay—his "Lays of Ancient Rome"—may fairly be called, not an exhumation of decayed materials, but a reproduction of classical vitality. The only thing we might object to, is the style and form of his metres and rhythms, which are not classical, but Gothic, and often remind us of the "Percy Reliques." There is no attempt to imitate the ancient metres. In other respects these Lays are Roman to the back-bone; and where not so, they are Homeric. The events and subjects of the poems are chosen with an heroic spirit; there is all the hard glitter of steel about the lines!—their music is the neighing of steeds, and the tramp of armed heels; their inspiration was the voice of a trumpet.

“And nearer fast and nearer
Doth the red whirlwind come ;
And louder still and still more loud,
From underneath that rolling cloud,
Is heard the trumpet’s war-note proud,
The trampling, and the hum.
And plainly and more plainly
Now through the gloom appears,
Far to left and far to right,
In broken gleams of dark-blue light,
The long array of helmets bright,
The long array of spears.”

* * * * *

“And backward now and forward
Wavers the deep array ;
And on the tossing sea of steel,
To and fro the standards reel ;
And the victorious trumpet-peal
Dies fitfully away.”—HORATIUS.

THOMAS HOOD

AND

THE LATE THEODORE HOOK.

"Or send to us
Thy wit's great overplus :
But teach us yet
Wisely to husband it ;
Lest we that talent spend :
And having once brought to an end
That precious stock ; the store
Of such a wit : the world should have no more."—HERRICK.

"Have gentility, and scorn every man!"—BEN JONSON.

"And laughter oft is but an art
To drown the outcry of the heart."—HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

"Act freely, carelessly, and capriciously ; as if our veins ran with quicksilver ; and not utter a phrase but what shall come forth steeped in the very brine of conceit, and sparkle like salt in fire."

BEN JONSON, *Cynthia's Revels*.

THERE are some writers, whose popularity has been so long established, is so well deserved, and about the character of whose genius there is so correct a general impression in the mind of the public, that very little more need be said about them. But these are few in number. For, although it is not uncommon for the majority to be tolerably unanimous in its opinion of a favourite, it certainly very rarely occurs that such opinion is so perfectly satisfactory as to leave no opportunity and no wish to offer any further comment upon the individual or his works. Such, however, is the case with regard to Thomas Hood ; and almost in an equal degree as to the late Theodore Hook, though the men are very different. We shall do little more, therefore, than endeavour to arrange and illustrate in a compact form, what we believe to be the popular impressions of both.

Mr. Hood possesses an original wealth of humour, invention, and an odd sort of wit that should rather be called whimsicality, or a faculty of the "high fantastic." Among comic writers he is one of those who also possess genuine pathos ; it is often deep, and of much tenderness, occasional sweetness of expression,

and full of melancholy memories. The predominating characteristics of his genius are humorous fancies grafted upon melancholy impressions. It is a curious circumstance, that in his "Whims and Oddities," of bygone years, the majority of them, by far, turned upon some painful physicality. A boy roaring under the rod—a luckless individual being thrown over a horse's head—an old man with his night-cap on fire—a clergyman with his wig accidentally caught off his head by a pitch-fork—a man pursued by a bull,—skeletons, death, duels—cats with mice, dogs with kettles—&c. These are the kind of things (we do not recollect if all these are actually in his books) in which his annual presents abounded. Nobody who takes a second look at any of these can feel them in a very jocular sense. If at all considered, they cease to be pleasurable. In the very first article of his "Magazine" recently published, there is a morbid energy of desolation and misery for the love of those things, and there is no story to relieve the feelings. A ghost or goblin of any kind would have been a real comfort. "The Haunted House" is a wonderful production for its prolonged inspiration of wretchedness and squalid catalogue of ruin. Such are Hood's latent characteristics, at all events; but the more obvious features are those of humour, and a most ingenious eccentricity. His fancies often bear an appearance of being studied, and seem to have arisen from the mind of a thoughtful humourist. Still, they are unaffected, and like himself. The fertility of his wit has chiefly been displayed in the application of his most erratic fancies to the current topics of the day, its men and manners, its sayings and doings, its ignorances and illiberalties. Mr. Hood is almost exclusively known as a comic writer, and his "Plea of the Midsummer Fairies" is little read in comparison: nevertheless, his songs and lyrical compositions have much sweetness, refinement, and tender melancholy. His prose and his verse equally illustrate his tendency to serious and pathetic writing. Though the touches of sadness are generally brief, and at unexpected seasons, Mr. Hood has still shown himself capable of writing a long narrative of serious interest and sustained purpose—carried on clear through the very thick of the cross-fire of puns, jokes, and extravaganzas—and convinced us that had he pleased (or had he pos-

sessed less versatility) he would have taken a permanent position among the highest class of English novelists,—if his “Tylney Hall” does not already entitle him to this rank. It will be recognized as a work of genius, when hundreds of novels which have been popular since its publication, have lined trunks, and the trunks been burnt for fire-wood.

Theodore Hook possessed both wit and humour, and told a story well. He had great graphic powers in the ridiculous, and a surprising readiness of invention, or novel application. But his wit was generally malicious, and his humour satirical. If he made a sharp hit at an individual peculiarity, the point generally went through into human nature. You could not help laughing, but were generally ashamed at yourself for having laughed. The objects of his satire were seldom the vices or follies of mankind; but generally their misfortunes, or manners, or unavoidable disadvantages, whether of a physical or intellectual kind. A poor man with his mutton bone, was a rich meal for his comic muse; and he was convulsed at the absurdity of high principles in rags, or at all needy. He never made fun of a lord. He would as soon have taken the King of Terrors pickaback, as made fun of a lord. He was at the head of that unfortunately large class, who think that a brilliant sally of wit, or fancy, at any cost of truth or feeling, is not only the best thing in society but the best proof of sterling genius; and that one of the finest tests of a dashing fellow of spirit is to steal clothes, *i. e.* not pay a tailor’s bill;—nor any other bill that can be helped, it might be added. Mr. Hood was a wit about town, and a philosopher while recovering from “the effects of last night.” His writings tended to give an unfavourable view of human nature, to make one suspicious and scornful. On the whole, though you had been amused and interested as you went on, you were left uncomfortable, and wished you could forget what you had read.

Both these writers possess very great mastery of comic expression, and characteristic felicity of versification and rhyming. In addition to this, there was a novel feature introduced by Hood in his annuals, which often had an extremely ludicrous effect—*viz.* that of drawing in illustration, made by one who *had* “the idea,” but no knowledge or ability in drawing. Since Hood

really could draw, his performances in this way must be regarded as all the more ingenious. The most extraordinary attitudes and intentions, and the most difficult foreshortenings, were boldly attempted after the fashion of a child on a slate, but with a determined, un-misgiving, mind's eye, and apparently the most self-complaisant result. They were often quite irresistible. It is not, at the same time, to be denied that they continually gave you a very uncomfortable sensation.

We could not, perhaps, convey a much better notion of Mr. Hook's style of writing, and of his actual habits of life, than in the following quotation from the Second Series of "Sayings and Doings:—

"What's the hour?" said George.

"Past six," answered his friend; "so go: sleep off your sorrow, and I and Wilson will settle the order of the day."

"By the way," said George, "we have something particular for to-day."

"Particular!" answered Dyson; "indeed have we—there's the Fives Court at one—at four the dear Countess—'gad how she did eat, this last past night of her joyous life."

"And *drink* too," interrupted George.

"She never refuses Roman punch," observed Dyson, "I never saw a freer creature in *that* line in my life; to be sure she is dreadfully under-rated; her cousin they say is a tallowchandler; and, upon my life, I never sit near her but I fancy I smell the moulds."

"Hang the moulds!" said George, "she is good-natured, and I like her."

"The good nature arises from her good set of teeth," said Dyson; "if ever you want laughers, George, to make up a party, study the ivory. Be sure your guests have good teeth, and they'll laugh at the worst story of a dinner-going wit, rather than not show the 'white and even.' Never mind; at four we go to the Countess, at six we try a new off-leader, at seven I have a short call to make in the New Road, and at eight we all dine here. After *that*, trust to chance: by the way, George, before you go to bed, I'll trouble you to lend me a couple of hundred pounds."

"To be sure," said George, turning to his prime minister, who was waiting; "Wilson, let Mr. Dyson have what he wants."

"Sir," exclaimed Wilson.

"Don't scold me, Mr. Wilson," said his master: "my friend Dyson must *not* be refused; so good night, most worthy Arthur." Saying which the master of the house retired to rest, escorted by his body-servant Monsieur Duval.

"Now, Wilson," said Mr. Dyson, "the money if you please, at your earliest convenience."

"Money, Sir?" said Wilson.

"Yes, money, Mr. Wilson," repeated the young worthy; "why, you stare as if I asked you to pay the national debt; I only want you to give me two hundreds of pounds."

"I could do the one as easily as the other," answered the man.

"Why, you keep your master's purse, Mr. Wilson?"

The Man of Many Friends.

So much for the knowledge and experience of fashionable life, its follies, extravagances, and "principles" of conduct. Let us turn to something more kindly from the pages of Hood. We can hardly do better than,

turn to the First Series of "Whims and Oddities," and the first thing that meets our eye, is "Moral Reflections on the Cross of St. Paul's:"—

"And what is life? and all its ages—
 There's seven stages!
 Turnham Green! Chelsea! Putney! Fulham!
 Brentford! and Kew!
 And Tooting, too!
 And oh! what very little nags to pull 'em.
 Yet each would seem a horse indeed,
 If here at Paul's tip-top we'd got 'em;
 Although like Cinderella's breed,
 They're mice at bottom.
 Then let me not despise a horse,
 Though he looks small from Paul's high cross!
 Since he would be,—as near the sky,
 —Fourteen hands high.

"What is this world with London in its lap?
 Mogg's Map.
 The Thames, that ebbs and flows in its broad channel?
 A *tidy* kennel.
 The bridges stretching from its banks?
 Stone planks.
 Oh me! hence could I read an admonition
 To mad Ambition!
 But that he would not listen to my call,
 Though I should stand upon the cross, and *ball!*"

Mr. Hood's sympathies are with humanity; they are not often genial, because of a certain grotesque sadness that pervades them, but they are always kindly. He is liberal-minded, and of an independent spirit. His inner life is clearly displayed by his various writings. Mr. Hook had no sympathies with humanity for its own sake, but only as developed and modified by aristocratic circumstances and fashionable tastes. He was devoted to splendid externals. He may be said to have had no inner life—except that the lofty image of a powdered footman, with golden aiguillettes and large white calves, walked with a great air up and down the silent avenues of his soul. But the life of animal spirits, Hook possessed in an eminent degree. They appeared inexhaustible, and being applied as a sort of "steam" or laughing gas to set in motion his invention and all its fancies, and his surprising faculty of extemporaneous song-making, it is no wonder that his company was so much in request, and that he was regarded as such a delightful time-killer and incentive to wine by the "high bloods of the upper circle." He made them laugh at good things, and forget themselves. He also made them drink. Thus are red herrings and anchovies used.

Sad vision of a man of genius, as Hook certainly was, assiduously pickling his prerogative, and selling his birth-right for the hard and thankless servitude of pleasing idle hours and pampered vanities. The expenses, the debts, the secret drudgery, the splitting head-aches and heart's misery he incurred, in order to maintain his false position in these circles, are well known ; and furnish one more warning to men of genius and wit, of how dearly, how ruinously they have to *pay* for an invitation to a great dinner, and a smile from his Grace. The man of moderate means who usually dines at home, saves money besides his independence ; but the man who is always "dining out" let him look to his pocket, as well as his soul.

Mr. Hood, in private, offers a marked contrast to all that has been said of Theodore Hook. In nothing, perhaps, more than in this—that Hook was "audible, and full of vent," and Hood is habitually retiring and silent. Mr. Hood was originally intended for an engraver ; but abandoned the profession, probably because a "graver" could not be found.

Mr. Hook displayed a dashing physique ; Mr. Hood rather resembles a gentleman of a serious turn of mind, who is out of health. Within this unpromising outside and melancholic atmosphere, lie hidden, and on the watch,—a genius of quaint humour, a heart of strong emotions, and a spirit of kindness towards all the world.

HARRIET MARTINEAU

AND

MRS. JAMESON.

"Therefore she walks through the great city, veiled
In virtue's adamantine eloquence,
'Gainst scorn, and death, and pain, thus trebly mailed.
And blending in the smiles of that defence,
The serpent and the dove—Wisdom and Innocence."
REVOLT OF ISLAM

"A thousand winged Intelligences daily
Shall be thy ministers.—
——Thou shalt command all Arts,
As handmaids."—MICROCOSMUS.

"I meant the day-star should not brighter rise,
Nor lend like influence from its lucent seat;
I meant she should be courteous, facile, sweet,
Hating that solemn vice of greatness, pride;
I meant each softest virtue there should meet,
Fit in that softer bosom to reside :
Only a learned and a manly soul
I purposed her; that should, with even powers,
The rock, the spindle, and the shears controul
Of destiny, and spin her own free hours."—BEN JONSON.

HARRIET MARTINEAU, in whose powers of keen observation, clear thought, patient study, and untiring energy, guided always by singleness of purpose in the pursuit of truth, we should naturally have found promise of a long career of constantly progressive intellectual labour, has been withdrawn by disabling illness from the active course which from her youth she had worthily pursued. Had it been otherwise, a review of the character of her mind and writings must have been conducted as only an examination of one portion of their manifestations, and must have been prophetic as well as retrospective. As it is, it must bear something of the impress of finality. Yet, it will not be worthy of its subject if on that account it is tinged with regret or complaint. In her consistent and well-ordered mind, nothing akin to such a feeling has found a place. We did not require to be told that she has endured the ordeal, peculiarly hard to one of her active habits, with

cheerfulness, courage, and faith in "the soul of goodness in things evil." The few works she has published since her illness have been addressed to the young, and written in a tone of entire sympathy with their buoyant life. This shows a singular freshness of spirit maintained throughout the languor and suffering of the bodily frame. The moral influence emanating from her sick room, and hitherto exerted over the circle of her friends, has by her volume of essays just published, extended itself more widely. Of this beautiful volume we shall speak in its place. It is a pathetic illustration of the way in which

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

Harriet Martineau was born in the year 1802, one of the youngest among a family of eight children. Her father was a proprietor of one of the manufactories in Norwich, in which place his family, originally of French origin, had resided since the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. She has herself ascribed her taste for literary pursuits to the extreme delicacy of her health in childhood; to the infirmity (deafness) with which she has been afflicted ever since, which without being so complete as to deprive her absolutely of all intercourse with the world, yet obliged her to seek occupations and pleasures within herself; and to the affection which subsisted between her and the brother nearest her own age, the Rev. James Martineau, whose fine mind and talents are well known. The occupation of writing, first begun to gratify her own taste and inclination, became afterwards to her a source of honourable independence, when by one of the disasters so common in trade, her family became involved in misfortunes. She was then enabled to reverse the common lot of unmarried daughters in such circumstances, and cease to be in any respects a burthen. She realized an income sufficient for her simple habits, but still so small as to enhance the integrity of the sacrifice which she made to principle in refusing the pension offered to her by Government in 1840. Her motive for refusing it, was, that she considered herself in the light of a political writer, and that the offer did not proceed from the people, but from the Government which did not represent the people.

The list of works published by Harriet Martineau is

sufficient of itself to prove her great industry and perseverance in a course once begun. It will be seen that she published early in life, and that the series of her works proceeds with scarcely a break, year by year, onward to the period of her illness. Full as it is, it does not comprehend her numerous contributions to periodical literature, some of which are among the most valuable of her compositions. The list is as follows :—

- 1823.—“Devotional Exercises, for the use of Young Persons.”
 1824. & 5.—“Christmas Day, or the Friends,” a tale. “The Friends.”—Second Part.
 1826.—“Principle and Practice,” a tale. “The Rioters.” “Addresses, Prayers, and Original Hymns.”
 1827.—“Mary Campbell,” a tale. “The Turn Out,” a tale.
 1829.—“Sequel to Principle and Practice,” a tale. Tracts, for Houlston.
 “My Servant Rachel,” a tale.
 1830.—“Traditions of Palestine.” “The Essential Faith of the Universal Church,” (Prize Essay.) “Five Years of Youth,” a tale.
 1831.—“The Faith as unfolded by many Prophets,” (Prize Essay.) “Providence as manifested through Israel.” (Prize Essay.)
 1832, 3, & 4.—“Illustrations of Political Economy,” “Illustrations of Taxation,” tales. “Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated,” tales.
 In this interval Miss Martineau went to America.
 1837.—“Society in America.”
 1838.—“Retrospect of Western Travel.” “Letter to the Deaf.” “How to observe Morals and Manners.” “The Maid of All Work,” (Guide to Service.) “The Lady’s Maid.”
 1839.—“Deerbrook,” a novel. “The Housemaid,” (Guide to Service).
 1840.—“The Dressmaker,” with technical aid. (Guide to Trade.) “The Hour and the Man,” a Romance.
 1841.—“The Playfellow,” 4 vols., viz. :—“The Settlers at Home.” “The Peasant and the Prince.” “Feats on the Fiord.” “The Crofton Boys.”

From these works, the authoress would doubtless, like all those who have published early in life, gladly expunge some of the earliest. Yet there is not one among them which is out of keeping with the rest. All are written with a moral aim, in some higher, in others lower, but always apparent; all are remarkable for a free, clear, and unaffected style, which in her later productions is admirable from its lucid distinctness and simple force; and the whole taken together evince a continual improveability and progression, an undoubted sign of the possession on the part of the writer, of a mind open to and earnest for truth.

The year 1830 marks an epoch in the mind we are studying: the works from that period assume a higher tone, and have in general a higher aim. The “Traditions of Palestine” was a beautiful conception, executed in a spirit of love and poetry which throws a charm over its pages. The period in which Jesus Christ ful-

filled his mission on earth, the people among whom he dwelt, the scenes in which he moved, the emotions he awakened, the thoughts he kindled, all are portrayed in a series of descriptions; while He himself (with that true art which has in this instance been instilled by reverence) is never introduced in person. This little book must kindle pure and holy thoughts wherever it is read.

The three Prize Essays published in this and the following year by the Association of Unitarian Dissenters, to which Miss Martineau belongs, display some of the chief powers of her mind. At this period she began her contributions to the "Monthly Repository;" these were sometimes original essays, tales, or poetry; sometimes reviews of metaphysical or theological works. Among the most excellent, we may notice the "Essays on the Art of Thinking," on the "Religion of Socrates," and "True Worshippers;" but *above all*, the poem for the month of August, in a series by different authors, entitled "Songs of the Months."

All these literary labours were coincident with the design which was afterwards accomplished in the "Illustrations of Political Economy." She has herself ascribed the original idea of this successful work to the reading of Mrs. Marcet's "Conversations on Political Economy" which made her perceive that in her own tales entitled the "Rioters" and "The Turn-Out," she had written political economy as M. Jourdain spoke prose, without knowing it. The question which thence presented itself, as to why all the doctrines of the science should not be equally well illustrated by fiction, was followed by a resolution to risk the publication of her Tales. The plan had been rejected by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. They could not see that any practical knowledge or truth was to be conveyed through the medium of fiction, which they regarded in all its forms as light reading, in direct opposition to weighty facts. The leading publishers, probably had a similar impression; and would not accept the work. At length one was found who undertook the enterprise, and at the end of a month complete success was certain. The books were in everybody's hands; the new number was watched for at the beginning of every month; edition was called for after edition; translations into French and German were made;

the reputation of Harriet Martineau as an able writer, was established.

This is not the place for an examination of the doctrines of political economy; nor would any such task be incumbent, even in a lengthened analysis of Miss Martineau's work. The task which she proposed to herself was to illustrate such parts of the fundamental doctrines of the science as lead to important practical results, adopting the doctrines as taught by the highest contemporary authorities. No one will deny the clearness and completeness of her illustration. Her correct interpretation of her authorities is questioned only on one point by a high authority, Mr. John Mill, in his review of her series. That point is her "unqualified condemnation of the *principle* of the poor-laws." "In this," says the reviewer, "she is decidedly behind the present state of the science." What this principle has effected in the working, is another matter. We should, however, conceive on the evidence of passages in her work on "America," relating to the competitive system and its necessary results, that she has subsequently abandoned her former views on this subject.

The stories, by means of which she illustrates her main points, are generally constructed admirably, and testify to a great power of invention. It was no slight undertaking to contrive an interesting plot bearing on twenty-four doctrines of political economy; six more on taxation; and four more on poor-laws and paupers! But the majority of these stories really are interesting on their own account; some of them deeply so. We need only instance "Ireland" as perhaps the finest of all, and add that it was worthily companioned.

The choice of such a class of subjects gave rise to all manner of imputations. The "Quarterly Review," in especial, while enlarging on what did not appear to it as "feminine," certainly forgot what was gentlemanly. To most dispassionate inquirers, the choice will appear simply an evidence of the possession of a mind keenly alive to perceptions of all outward things; actively benevolent; observant of passing events, and the wants and evils of the age; turning its attention, therefore, to studies bearing on those evils and their remedies; logical rather than creative; hopeful of good, therefore too ready at times to adopt a theory bearing a promise of good; and having embraced it, clear and acute in

working it out. Too unshackled in spirit, too unaffected and simple-minded to be deterred for a moment from putting forth to the world that which she had conceived of truth and wisdom, by any consideration of what this or the other organ might decide on the subject of feminine occupations; but that which she found to do, "doing it with her might."

The work on "America," written after the tour which Miss Martineau made in that country, is very valuable, as containing an admirably written description by an accurate observer, with a most candid mind and a thirst after the truth. At that period she was possessed of perfect health, and the good spirits natural to her were enhanced by success. The book breathes of cheerfulness and hopefulness. She evidently enjoyed her residence among the Americans, and she has dwelt on their fine institutions, their grand country, their many advantages, as on a favourite theme. Their lighter faults she has touched lightly; their graver errors with a melancholy earnestness. "Their civilization and morals," says she, "fall far below their own principle." This is enough to say. It is better than contrasting them with "European morals and civilization." This is undoubtedly the only philosophical view of the matter; and it is wiser to have faith like Harriet Martineau that the ideal standard set before them will elevate them to itself in time, than to reproach them with the discrepancy. It is no wonder that the subject is puzzling to us, who have outgrown our Institutions, and are obliged to maintain a continual struggle to bring them into something like harmony with our morals and civilization. Her chapters on slavery and its aspects have a solemnity of reprobation. On the other hand, the following passage contains a view of this subject which other nations are too apt to forget, and is a good instance of that clear-sightedness and candour which are so characteristic of the writer:

"The nation must not be judged of by that portion whose worldly interests are involved in the maintenance of the anomaly; nor yet by the eight hundred flourishing abolition societies of the north, with all the supporters they have in unassociated individuals. The nation must be judged of as to Slavery by neither of these parties; but by the aspect of the conflict between them. If it be found that the five abolitionists who first met in a little chamber five years ago, to measure their moral strength against this national enormity, have become a host beneath whose assaults the vicious institution is rocking to its foundations, it is time that slavery was ceasing to be a national reproach. Europe now owes to America the justice of regarding her

as the country of abolitionism, quite as emphatically as the country of slavery."—*Society in America*, v. 3, p. 249.

This work is as remarkable for its fearless outspoken tone as for its cheerful, hopeful, and candid views of things. Among other subjects on which the opinions of the writer are freely stated, is that of the condition of women. Miss Martineau accuses the American Constitution of inconsistency in withholding from women political and social equality with men. She points out that while it proclaims, in theory, the equal rights of all the human race (except the blacks), it excludes one-half of the human race from any political rights whatever; neither providing for their independence as holders of property, nor as controllers of legislation, although their interests are equally concerned in both with those of men.

A similarity of opinion on this question is to be found in the writings of Mrs. Jameson. Her delightful work, the "Characteristics of Women," may be said to have derived its origin from her strong feelings concerning the imperfect institutions of society with regard to her own sex; and in her "Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada," she has explicitly and in eloquent terms stated her dissatisfaction, though she has rather called upon legislators to provide a remedy than pointed one out herself, except in her advocacy of a more enlarged and more enlightened system of education.

It is evident that these two fine-minded women have been led to the same opinions by totally different circumstances, and hence they hold them "with a difference." The calm temperament, clear intellect, and active energy of Harriet Martineau ensured to herself a moral independence; the intellectual society in which she moved encouraged it, and her logical head set her to the investigation of the causes which debarred the generality of women from the enjoyment of the healthy and cheerful tone of the inner life of which she was conscious herself. In her writings, therefore, we find no complaints; simply a recognition of existing evils, and an indication of their remedies. With Mrs. Jameson it is different. She sees more difficulties in the case. She knows by experience more of the complications, and is conscious of the mysterious links and sympathies by which the chains have been wound around that half of the human race to which she belongs. Her

feelings have been awakened to the subject by experience of suffering: and looking round her, and seeing how widely spread such suffering is, she points to the master passion whence she feels it springs, and to the evil at the root of the tree of life, with a cry for help which often sounds like a wail of despair;

"Strange, and passing strange," she says, "that the relation between the two sexes, the passion of love, in short, should not be taken into deeper consideration by our teachers and our legislators. People educate and legislate as if there was no such thing in the world; but ask the priest, ask the physician—let *them* reveal the amount of moral and physical results from this one cause. * * Must love be ever treated with profaneness, as a mere illusion? or with coarseness, as a mere impulse? or with fear, as a mere disease? or with shame, as a mere weakness? or with levity, as a mere accident? Whereas, it is a great mystery and a great necessity, lying at the foundation of human existence, morality, and happiness—mysterious, universal, inevitable as death. Why, then, should love be treated less seriously than death? It is as serious a thing. * * * * Death must come and love must come—but the state in which they find us?—whether blinded, astonished, and frightened, and ignorant, or, like reasonable creatures, guarded, prepared, and fit to manage our own feelings?—*this*, I suppose, depends on ourselves; and for want of such self management and self-knowledge, look at the evils that ensue!—hasty, improvident, unsuitable marriages; repining, diseased, or vicious celibacy; irretrievable infamy; cureless insanity:—the death that comes early, and the love that comes late, reversing the primal laws of our nature."

Mrs. Jameson is well aware of the odium likely to fall upon any meddler with this subject, and thus humorously describes the danger she runs upon:

"It is like putting one's hand into the fire, only to touch upon it; it is the universal bruise, the putrifying sore, on which you must not lay a finger, or your patient (that is, society) cries out and resists; and, like a sick baby, scratches and kicks its physician."—*Mrs. Jameson's "Canada,"* vol. 3, p. 12, 13.

Mrs. Jameson is an established favourite with the public. She is an accomplished woman, an elegant writer, and her refined taste and quick sensibility are good influences on her age. Her "Characteristics of Women" contain a searching analysis of character and fine criticism, such as ought to place her name among those of the greatest of the commentators of Shakspeare. Her exposition of the character of Cordelia is, in especial, beautifully true; and her perception of the intensity, and strength, and real dignity of soul in Helena (in "All's Well that Ends Well"), notwithstanding that the tenour of all the incidents and circumstances around her wound and shock, manifests the true power to look beyond the outward shows of things and read the heart. The "Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad" is a delightful book; accomplishing that rare task of ren-

dering descriptions of works of art pleasant reading instead of dull catalogues. The authoress has also published the "Lives of Celebrated Female Sovereigns;" and "Explanatory Notes to the Series of Outlines by Retzch," called "Retzch's Fancies." The "Diary of an Ennuyée" has gone through more editions than any of her works. It is not only a delightful book of travels, but the vivid picture of an individual mind—a personal narrative, which is always exciting and interesting. But self-consciousness, the bane of all real emotion, is implied in the possibility of recording emotion; and feeling is apt "to die, if it but look upon itself." Hence, we regard those who enrich the world's experience by the disclosure of their own souls, to be themselves the sacrifice; for both joy and sorrow are blunted by their own record.

The "Deerbrook" of Harriet Martineau has not enhanced the reputation of its authoress. The conception involves a moral puzzle, which is always painful. Neither does the catastrophe solve the puzzle. As the hero is made to sacrifice love to a supposed and mistaken view of duty, thus tampering with a great reality for the sake of a shadow, the plot ought to end in a tragedy, instead of in peace after a struggle. "The Hour and the Man," is a story of deep interest; but fiction has done little for it. In the form of an authentic memoir of its grand subject, the life and death of "Toussaint L'Ouverture," its effect would have been more powerful. Much finer than either of these works of fiction are the tales comprising the series called the "Play-fellow," published within the last two years. These tales, constructed simply, to suit the minds for which they are intended, and founded on the emotions and actions of children, breathe a spirit of noble fortitude, endurance, energy, and self-control, which make them healthy reading for old and young. If they have a fault it is that they are rather wanting in love as an influence, resting more on the teachings of suffering. Among them all "The Crofton Boys" is our especial favourite. In all these works there is evinced a very great power of description, and frequently a quiet humour. Harriet Martineau is never personal nor satirical. "Life in the Sick Room" is published without a name; but that she is the authoress cannot be doubted for a moment by any one who has studied her writings,

and far less by any one who has held companionship with herself; for it breathes of herself in every thought and word, chastened, purified, and instructed by suffering, and with eyes firmly fixed on the countenance of the Angel of Death, which is to her not terrible, but calm, in pale and solemn beauty. It would also appear, though no name is mentioned, that the friend to whom she dedicates the volume is Elizabeth B. Barret, the elegant poetess and accomplished scholar, who, like herself, long immured within the four walls of her chamber, yet possesses sympathies alive to beauty and all fine influences, and a spirit expanding into and aspiring towards infinity. The holy teachings of this book are more touching in their wisdom than would be the words of one who came to us "from the dead;" for here the bourne is not passed; the words come indeed from one who has become accustomed to her "footing on the shaking plank over the deep dark river," but who is not too far removed from our sympathies, and has not yet laid aside the conditions of our common nature.

Both these fine writers have, as we have seen, advocated a re-modelling of our institutions with regard to their own sex. The one represents the intellect of the question, the other the feeling; one brings to it an acute abstract comprehension, the other all the sympathies of a woman; one reasons from observation, the other from experience; one has been roused to the cause by general benevolence, the other, probably, by personal suffering. Harriet Martineau has devoted her powers chiefly to science, moral or political. She has generally written with some fixed aim, some doctrine to illustrate, some object to accomplish. Mrs. Jameson, on the other hand, has pursued the study of art. She is a fine critic, and possesses a subtle insight into character. We may expect many more works from her. To the course of Harriet Martineau we must look as to one nearly closed; but close when it may, she has done enough to prove her possession of a mind endowed with the capability of great usefulness, which she has nobly applied to high purposes. She has shown the power of grasping a principle; of evolving from it all its legitimate consequences, and of so clearly arranging them as to present truth to the understanding and to the heart also by its consistency and harmony. Her genius is not creative; but her works of fiction ex-

hibit a rare faculty of conception, and the power of combining the materials collected by her accurate observation and clear thought, so as to produce a charm and an interest. She is poetical, though not a poet. One composition, however, to which we have already referred, might, by itself, give her a claim to the title; but, perhaps, there is no fine mind which has not in its time produced its one poem. We conclude with that poem, and we feel that in reference to her, we so conclude, appropriately:—

“SONG FOR AUGUST.”

“Beneath this starry arch,
Nought resteth or is still;
But all things hold their march
As if by one great will.
Moves one, move all;
Hark to the foot-fall!
On, on, for ever.

“Yon sheaves were once but seed;
Will ripens into deed;
As cave-drops swell the streams,
Day thoughts feed nightly dreams—
And sorrow tracketh wrong,
As echo follows song.
On, on, for ever.

“By night, like stars on high,
The hours reveal their train;
They whisper and go by;
I never watch in vain.
Moves one, move all;
Hark to the foot-fall!
On, on, for ever.

“They pass the cradle head,
And there a promise shed;
They pass the moist new grave,
And bid rank verdure wave;
They bear through every clime,
The harvests of all time.
On, on, for ever.”

SHERIDAN KNOWLES

AND

WILLIAM MACREADY.

"Too *popular* is Tragic Poesy,
Straining his tip-toes for a farthing fee.
Painters and Poets hold your ancient right !
Write what you will, and write not what you might.
Their limits be their list—their reason, *will!*"

BISHOP HALL'S *Satires*.

THE DRAMA should be the concentrated spirit of the age. The Stage should be the mirror over which every varying emotion of the period should pass. What is the Spirit of an Age as regards the Drama? Certainly the Theatrical Spirit is the most undramatic that can be. Stage-plays are not of necessity Dramas, and more truly dramatic elements may be found in the novelist's works than in the theatrical writer's. The Dramatic Spirit of our Age, of this very year, is to be found more living and real in the pages of Hood, Dickens, Mrs. Gore, and Mrs. Trollope, than in the play-house pieces. These writers gather for themselves the characteristics of existence as modified by the principles and taste of the age, and the latter draw from them, or from the large conventional storehouse of the hereditary drama their traditional portraiture.

In this portion of our subject, must we then examine the works of the novelists and other writers of fiction, rather than the stage writers? To be strictly logical, this should be the case; but as our work is historical as well as critical, we must adhere to the popular and forsake the philosophical classification.

The visible Drama is most eminently portrayed in the works of Sheridan Knowles, and the acting of William Macready. These two gentlemen, at all events, are the visible representers of it, and ninety-men out of every hundred allude to and think of them when discussing Dramatic matters. This is reversing the rational state of the matter; but being so, we must endeavour to accommodate ourselves to it.

The only way in which Mr. Knowles personifies our age, is in his truly domestic feeling. The age is domestic, and so is he. Comfort—not passionate imaginings,—is the aim of every body, and he seeks to aid and gratify this love of comfort. All his dramas are domestic, and strange to say, those that should be most classic, or most chivalric, most above and beyond it, are the most imbued with this spirit. In what consists the interest and force of his popular play of “*Virginius*?” The domestic feeling. The costume, the setting, the decorations are heroic. We have Roman tunics, but a modern English heart,—the scene is the Forum, but the sentiments those of the “*Bedford Arms*.” The affection of the father for his daughter—the pride of the daughter in her father, are the main principles of the play, and the pit and galleries and even much of the boxes are only *perplexed* with the lictors and Decemviri, and the strange garments of the actors. These are a part of the shew folks’ endeavour to amuse. Is Caius Gracchus not heroic?—are there not very long speeches about Liberty and Rome? Undoubtedly: but still the whole care of Gracchus is for his family: and to the audience the interest is entirely domestic.

It is the same in “*William Tell*,” though liberty and heroism should be the prevailing subject, the interest is entirely domestic. For the freedom of a country, for the punishment of a petty-minded tyrant the auditor of this play but slenderly cares,—while for the security of Tell’s family and the personal success of Tell, every one is anxious. This feeling, in proportion as our author became popular, has only more visibly developed itself; and his later productions have manifested his prevailing quality more powerfully in the pure form of woman’s characteristics. Julia,—the Wife—the Countess Eppenstein, are fine impersonations of the affections; elaborated and exfoliated into all the ramifications of womanhood. Is this assertion of his ruling principle stated in a spirit of detraction? By no means: but only to enable us to trace the cause of Mr. Knowles’ popularity, as far as it extends, and to show the inevitable connexion the writer’s genius must have with the Spirit of the Age. Mr. Knowles is at the head of the acted Dramatists of the age, assuredly not because he has more invention, more wit, more knowledge of human character, or more artistical skill than many other

living dramatic writers, but because his genius, for domestic interests, added to his stage influence as an actor, has forced his talents into higher or fuller employment than that of any of his compeers. He has delved into the human breast, and traced the secret windings of the affections. Limited, indeed, to the emotions elicited by modern social intercourse, but still with genuine truth and varied knowledge. For this he is greatest in dialogue scenes that gradually and completely unfold a feeling. And again, this tendency of his genius induces him to delight in delineating the characteristics of woman.

He is entitled to respect inasmuch as he has risen instead of fallen with public approbation. In "Virginius," "Caius Gracchus," "Tell," we see the play-wright predominant. Mr. Knowles, when composing these, was struggling for fame, perhaps for existence, and he was compelled to pass through the turnpikes that public taste had erected, and managers maintained. Consequently, we find all the formula of the received drama,—shows, battles, bustle, antiquated phraseology, vapid imitations of obsolete humours, and altogether a barbarous medley of the traditionary and commonplace tricks of the theatre, introduced, first to attract managers and through them to charm the multitude. Gradually, however, as he won his way from servitude to power he used his success manfully. In the "Hunchback," he emancipated himself greatly from the trammels of the play-wright, and in the character of "Julia" gave full licence to his genius to develop his intuitions of female nature. The plot of this play is absurd, the construction clumsy, the attempt to delineate human character in many instances feeble—the language often grotesque; but it took hold of the public, it elicited unanimous applause, because in the woman it spoke the language of nature to nature. Herein he vindicated his high calling—herein he was the poet. Situation—sentiment—circumstance—show—processions—groupings—were abandoned, and human emotion finely expressed, won, and subdued all hearts,—chastening, whilst interesting; instructing, while it moved.

As an artist in dramatic composition, Mr. Knowles must be ranked with the least skilful, particularly of late. The comparative failure of his last three or four productions is chiefly attributable to their inefficiency

of construction, though they contain more beautiful poetry in detached fragments than can be found in any of his former works.

So much space would not rightly have been given to remarks on Mr. Knowles, but that he speaks the predominating feeling of the age. Were we to estimate him by comparison, or by analysis—by what has been, what^a is, and what may be, he would not hold a high rank—so great, so vast are the capacities of the Drama. Placed beside Shakspeare, and the powerful-minded men of Elizabeth's day, he dwindles, it is true;* but placed beside the Rowes, the Southernns, the Murphys—he is as a man to mouthing dwarfs. But, whatever he may be by comparison, he is truly a poet, and as such should be honoured.

But the Drama has many phases; and being so peculiarly an imitative art, how can it be otherwise? The most simple is that which reflects the tone and temperament of the age. This kind of Drama must not now be looked for amongst what is somewhat absurdly called the "legitimate." That phrase is foolishly applied to a form—the five-act form; and to that kind of Drama which includes philosophical exposition of human character, and philosophical and rhetorical dissertation upon it. But the most legitimate, because the genuine offspring of the age, is that Drama which catches the manners as they rise, and embodies the characteristics of the time. This, then, has forsaken the five-act form, and taken shelter at what have been named "Minor Theatres," and it will be found in the skilful little Comedies, and bright, racy Dramas of Jerrold, Planché, Bernard, Buckstone, Oxenford, Dance, Mark Lemon, Moncrieff, Coyne, Leman Rede, Lunn, Peake, Poole, and others. Few of these clever writers have made any pretensions, in writing for the stage, beyond pecuniary and fair professional motives. Mr. Jerrold, Mr. Oxenford, Mr. Planché, and several more, have various other claims in literature; but their position on the stage only is here treated. They have, each and all (though in very different quantities), lavished much wit, fancy, and invention on their productions, doomed by the theatrical destinies to an

* We should except the finer parts of his best dialogues, in which he does not dwindle beside the Elizabethan men, but is worthy to stand among them.—ED.

ephemeral existence. Some of their pieces have lived their thirty, fifty, and even hundred nights, and then been heard of no more. These writers have borne the brunt of much truculent and bombastic criticism—they have been miserably remunerated—and often but ill appreciated, though much applauded. Whoever for the last twenty years has spent his evenings at the Olympic, the Adelphi, the Haymarket, the Strand, the Surrey, and even the Victoria Theatres, cannot but recall the innumerable dramas that have risen, like summer clouds, evening after evening, only to be absorbed into a night, endless in all cases, and frequently undeserved. How many sparkling sallies—how much gaiety—how many humorous characteristics—lightly and vividly shadowing forth our social existence,—and what skill in the distribution of the action and effects! Could all the laughs be collected and re-uttered in a continuous volley, the artillery of Waterloo would be a trifle to it; nor would the rain of that destructive day exceed the tears that have been shed at these shrines of the dramatic muses. Yet the authors are spoken of slightly by the ponderous dispensers of fame; and treated by the managers, and even the delighted public, as something only a few degrees above street-minstrels. But herein is shadowed the fate of their mighty predecessors; and in the red-herring and rhenish banquet that killed Nash—in the tavern-brawling death of Marlowe—in the penury of Dekker—of Webster, who was a parish-clerk,—of Beaumont, and Fletcher, and the distresses of nearly every one of the dramatists of their age, is to be found the symbol of the conduct which originality ever suffers, in the first instance. Deaths that might have resembled Otway's, have no doubt been often within an ace of occurring among many of his fraternity. The present race are small of stature when measured with their noble progenitors—not because the present Age is so much less imaginative and impassioned, but because the public taste has been perverted and cannot improve of itself, and because managers, without a single exception, persist in pandering to that perversion, viz., addressing gaudy and expensive shows to the external senses. The elder dramatists were scholars and immortal poets writing to and for enquiring and earnest-minded men. The intellectual *wants* of that age were large—their speculative facul-

ties were fully developed—the grandest questions and the highest deeds occupied men, and the theme must be high and the development fine that satisfied them. Bacon propounded the proposition of Nature and its causes—Raleigh and Sydney embodied the Chivalry—and a Faith, burning and sincere, sought to penetrate the deepest recesses of man's eternal destinies. It is not meant to be argued that in their own day, any of the great men of former times, who needed bread, were not as liable to be half-starved as they are now; nor to be intimated that any such greatness exists in our day; but simply, that original greatness, *besides* all the old difficulties and neglects, has now a trading mass of hostile criticism against it, and that there is not the same enthusiasm to be half-starved as formerly.

The poets who speak to an age must be equal to it, or they will not be heard; if far beyond it they will not be listened to, in so far as they are beyond it. The elder dramatists having a ready access to the stage, and a cordial welcome, wrote with a full nature because their audiences felt it, and were not weak and dainty. Checked at every turn, our modern acted dramatists have for the most part sought to effect little more than pastime for the hour. The difference is at least as much in the times and circumstances as the men.

It is not to depreciate, but to estimate, that we compare. Whatever the amount of their ability, the truly dramatic, as far as it exists on the modern stage at all, will be found in these comparatively neglected writers of the minor drama. This neglect may be traced to one special cause—they are not “literary.” The literary men were opposed to them, and so strongly was this felt, that one of them said to another who has subsequently become one of the most popular essayists of the day, “So, you have left *us*, and taken to *literature*!” The Drama is so elastic as to embrace the highest poetry, philosophy, eloquence, wit, knowledge and learning, as exemplified by him who was great in each and all. It can, however, exist without any of these qualities, and reaches in a graphic vista from “Punch” to Æschylus. Our modern play-wrights (as they are nick-named) have sought only to please, and cared not to exercise more labour than was absolutely necessary for this end. Quickness—interest—invention—skill,

were demanded and provided, and often wit, humour, fancy and pathos thrown into the bargain.

In Jerrold's forty dramas who does not recognize an infinity of brilliant repartee—of fine sense and feeling? What a readiness in the dialogue!—What variety of characteristics! So much, that if carefully woven into no greater number of plays than Congreve wrote, would have provided a far more lasting and deserved reputation than that licentious classic has obtained. "Doves in a cage," the "Wedding Gown," "Nell Gwyn," the "Prisoner of War," and the remainder of the long list, how abounding are they with sparkling glances and pungent satire on the humours, follies and absurdities of existing life!

Mr. Buckstone is nearly as prolific as Thomas Heywood, and almost all his pieces have been successful, and deservedly so; that is, they have made hundreds and thousands laugh and cry, and speeded the hours of innumerable audiences. Quantity may not betoken quality, nor success merit, but still there must be, and there is, much of the latter in Buckstone. He is a translator, a hunter up of old stories, a retailer of old jokes, an adapter and stage artizan, say many. So he is; but still he does all these things with talent—he excellently adapts rather than translates—and gives new life to an old joke by giving it congenial characteristics. His hand is hard, his colouring coarse; but still he has a quick eye for social absurdities, knows the pulse of an audience, to the finest division; is admirable in construction, and effect, and possesses that very uncommon gift in an Englishman—a ceaseless flow of animal spirits, which is perhaps the main source of all his successes.

Mr. Bernard, in his earlier career, dealt more in the sentimental; and very delicate and high-toned were some of his dramas. They touched the chord of domestic feeling and rung a sharp and full vibration from it. "A man of Genius on his Last Legs" proved his rich sense of the absurd, as did many subsequent productions. He too is essentially of his age.

Mr. Oxenford has mastered the art of construction, and can manufacture a piece for the stage as a cabinet-maker fashions an ingenious article. His idea of fun is great, and his fancy is governed by a highly cultivated and instructed judgment. Invention and hu-

mour are his, as is evident to every one who has seen "A Day Well Spent."*

Mr. Planché, if only for the extraordinary number of dramas he has successfully produced, would deserve especial notice. Original dramas, translations, farces, interludes, operas, Christmas pleasantries, &c. ; he has contributed upwards of one hundred pieces to the stage, and with the exception of only three "damnations" they have all been successful! Mr. Planché has a vivid notion of manners, and depicts character as exemplified and modified by them, admirably. The fine lady of intrigue—the battered debauchee of rank—the man of pleasure—he delineates well. He has a strong feeling for, and admiration of the artificial elegancies of life—considerable fancy—a ready invention in character and situation, and great skill in new adaptations; not much wit or repartee, but a genial and laughable humour, and the rare art of throwing a refining atmosphere round even the most unpromising subjects. He has the most wary, watchful, logical head in the construction of a play, and could give instructions in this respect to some of the best dramatists, very much to their advantage.

But we must pass on, and without particularizing the individual characteristics of the pens of the many "ready writers" who have set in motion the various green-rooms.

Dance—and Leman Rede—have each made a path for themselves, nor can it be doubted but they possess in themselves the ability to produce something very superior to that which circumstance and the present condition of the stage requires at their hands; and Moncrieff only wanted to have fallen on a better age to have been ranked with some of the dramatists of a nobler era.

But have all the play-makers and stage-feeders been named?—Not a tenth part of them. Are all of the same ability?—By no means. A catalogue as lengthy as that of Homer's ships might be made, though their freights would by no means be so weighty. Shades of these shadows might be found; second, third, and fourth transmitters of a weak original; combinations of the ferocious and the witty, and imitators and con-

* Mr. Oxenford has also sterling claims in literature, were it only for his unrivalled translations from Calderon.—Ed.

structors so faint and poor that the art is no longer concealed, and the mechanism is apparent to all but the merest novices, or the most vapid imaginations. Surprises, rescues, and discoveries, perils, escapes, and disguises, so echoed and re-echoed that all effect is gone. Puns so obvious, allusions so dim, mistakes so absurd, disguises so thin, characteristics so exaggerated, equivoques so bald, that no reflecting mind could be entertained, or for a moment be deluded, by them. To particularize names here would be invidious. Though all who depress the age deserve as much castigation as those who by their talents raise it deserve eulogy, these are not of sufficient importance. Collectively, only, they are so. With such as we have last mentioned, the drama has sunk from the educated and the tasteful to the uncultivated, and those of coarser pleasures,—from the refined gentleman to the intelligent trader, and from him to the small shop-keeper, the inferior class of operatives, the ignorant, and the degraded.

The acted drama of our age is at the best but of a poor kind. It has been popular because it was small, and it was small because it merely sought popularity. But the great heart of the world, although it beat faintly, has not lost its vitality; and the sympathies, capacities, and wants of the human soul will manifest themselves. Whilst the stage only sought in general to shadow forth the smaller peculiarities of an actual and every-day life domesticity, there have been men in whom all the passionate energies and imaginings of our nature would burst forth. These men belonging to literature, and not to the stage, have been rightly designated as “unacted dramatists,” and the press gave to the world what the corrupted stages were too sunken in their own earthy ruins to be able to believe in, or even recognize as having any affinity with their own existence. The spirit of the drama no longer trod, but was trodden into “the boards,” and therefore a set of unacted dramatists arose, and will some day be seen and heard.

It has been erroneously fancied that inflated with a literary position and high notions, they both envied, and looked down upon their acted fraternity, and thought them mere usurpers. A greater calumny could not have been devised. On the contrary, the unacted dramatists consider those at present occupying the

stage, to be its only supporters; so far from envying their position, they consider their abilities underrated, and not sufficiently remunerated, and in all their successes they sympathize and rejoice. But that in the pure element of dramatic composition they also consider themselves worthy to be "ranked with some of the dramatists of a nobler era," is undoubtedly true,—and one of them has been heard to set at nought the scoffs of his time, by claiming to rank, in the pure elements of tragedy, with the dramatists of the Greek or Elizabethan ages.* How far any of those "high and remote" claims may have grounds, it is impossible to devote space for examination; they are mentioned, however, to show at least the vitality and self-reliance of the dramatic spirit, and that, besides the known and acted men, there is a "brood" as yet beneath the earth, who may one day spring up like the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus.

But it has been asked by some, even in our own country, who, not *seeing* a play, are by no means sure of its existence—"Who *are* those unacted dramatists?" The answer from lovers of the elder drama would be—"Shakspeare, in respect of at least two thirds of his plays; and Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, Webster, Marlowe,—in fact all the rest of the Elizabethan dramatists, who are absolutely unacted." Not to confuse the question, however, let us speak of the modern drama as it is:—"Who then are these unacted dramatists?" The answer must be—"Nearly all the best authors." The knowledge of some and the ignorance of others of the dramatic *art*, is not, at present, the question; the object is to show that all are treated with nearly the same exclusion; in fact, that there is manifestly the strongest tendency in the present age to be dramatic, but its chief authors have no means of learning the art. To go no further back than Byron, Southey, Shelley, Coleridge, the list includes almost every author eminent in works of imagination and invention. Even Wordsworth and Keats,—the two last men from whom anything in the shape of a drama could be expected, have written tragedies. Surely nothing can

* Our esteemed Contributor avoids naming the Author of "*Cosmo de Medici*," and "*Gregory VII.*," for obvious reasons; but lest some others might have to bear the odium of taking their position into their own hands, the offender is hereby "given up" to justice.—Ed.

more directly show the breadth of the external influences of this Spirit of the Age. It has even penetrated to the heart of the aristocracy, as shown in the dramas of Lord Francis Egerton, Lord John Russell, Lord John Manners, Lord Beaumont, &c. ; the "Francesca di Faenza" of the latter, containing some of the finest dramatic writing and situation of modern times.

The Drama is a root; a theatrical show is a mere blossom. One is born of its age, the other grows through it, out of the past into the future. The poet deals with eternal nature, and the eternal effects of nature. The poetaster deals with the tastes of men as formed by circumstances, and fashioned by convention and association; the poet with the passions of men, and the qualities of things. The one is guided by mere association, the other by analogy.* The one by casual prejudices, the other by truths. The poetaster appeals to the pleasurable recollections and notions by association; the poet extends our knowledge and experience, making the soul wise, because he proceeds by analogy. There are two kinds of dramatists. He who seeks to reflect back the sentiments, feelings, prejudices, and foibles of the day; who is at once an echo and a glass; and he who, passing by these common modes of procuring success, exemplifies the human creature in all the various phases that its intellect, temperament, passions, and desires produce.

They may to a certain degree, and perhaps must be mingled. But it is easy to see which mode will be pursued by those whose sole aim is the applause of "a house." At the hustings, the brawling reiteration of catch-words must be more *successful* (to use the favourite and hard-ridden modern phrase), than Plato or Coleridge would have been.

It may naturally be expected that some space should be devoted to the productions of two gentlemen who have written for the stage, and have attracted a large share of public attention by their well-merited success in other departments of literature, as well as law, politics, and various valuable public services. But for these reasons, Mr. Serjeant Talfourd, and Sir E. L.

* Mr. Henry Mayhew in his "What to teach, and how to teach it," was, we believe, the first author who forcibly marked out and illustrated this important distinction and theory. We also regard the treatises on the Drama by this gentleman's brother, Mr. Edward Mayhew, as highly deserving of careful study.

Bulwer, will receive a separate and more entire attention than could here be given to their claims. It will therefore be sufficient in the present paper to say that Talfourd—the representative of the classical drama, as Sheridan Knowles is of the romantic,—did really “stand in the gap” during the periods when there were few, if any such dramas as have since been *published*; and they jointly maintained the precarious existence of the English drama. Sir E. L. Bulwer, can hardly be considered as a dramatist, having pursued this class of writing, not from any strong internal gift and predominating impulse, but rather as a man of first-rate talent and ingenuity, who could produce any kind of literary article that might be in request, and having “all appliances and means to boot,” could not very easily (though he has managed that, too, occasionally) do other than succeed. This justly admired, and far more dramatic novelist, was apparently drawn to the stage by the ambition and excitement of a new and difficult pursuit, and every facility for learning the art, and every theatrical assistance being sedulously afforded him, his versatile ability and great industry were profitably rewarded. Above all things, however, his exertions for the freedom of the stage, long since, entitle him to the gratitude and respect of dramatists and actors.

Of the histrionic Art, at the head of which, in this country, Mr. Macready has stood of late years, by legitimate succession no less than by superior attainments and energies, it will not be requisite to say much, nor of its professors, because the nature of their position renders their claims so well known to the public. But the Art and its professors become of additional importance when it is considered that they excite the efforts—and to no purpose,—of all the most energetic and creative intellects in our literature.

While the biography and stage recollections of the most experienced mountebank of the time,* whose “experience” has been characterized by every degree of well-merited failure, could only produce, at best, a long account of trading speculations, and mechanical details,

* Here is an instance of the power of “position” in this country, and of irresponsibility in a manager. A well-known author of the highest ability,—Mr. Robert Bell, a truthful historian, an elegant biographer, and a conscientious critic, who is moreover universally respected and esteemed, has been subject to a great public injury, and, apparently, without any chance of redress.

conducted with all the arrogance of a grossly self-satisfied ignorance,—it is impossible to conceive of any biographical and professional recollections which would involve so large an amount of melancholy interest, to literary men more especially, as those of Mr. Macready.

Nothing like sufficient space could here be given for such recollections as Mr. Macready's professional career must embody, even if we possessed the materials. But how many phases of them present themselves to the mind? They must tell of early studies and difficulties, of efforts and disappointments, of renewed energies and labours, while vague aspirations and palpable ambitions broke through the fogs and mists of circumstance, as did the dangerous vision of a crown upon the yet uncertain mind of Macbeth. They must tell of slow acquirements, slow advances, chagrins, mortifications, exasperations, and redoubled efforts, with some successes, though so disproportionate to the efforts, the hopes, and, in many cases, to the just deserts. Gradually they would display successes, and popular successes, and the rank of "principal" in them, but not in the highest walk. Yet here would commence more completely the consciousness of that undue position over the intellectual men of a country, which every very successful actor or actress attains, in respect of one of the highest departments of literature. His recollections would now tell of dissatisfactions of positions, and cast of characters, and of nobler aims at greater excellence; of his attainment of the first class of characters, and his hard-earned successes in them, notwithstanding the all-but eclipsing and overwhelming genius, energy, and unequalled popularity of Kean;—of tormenting struggles of rivalry, and to maintain his position; of his gradual security, and, by degrees, of his fortitude, temperance, and unconquerable perseverance, bringing him his reward as sole possessor of the tragic throne, from which, step by step, with staggering power, his meteoric sword fading from his hand—his inspiration now bordering upon delirium—the intemperate, heart-desolate wreck of Edmund Kean, with hands still grappling the shape-thronged air, reeled away half unconsciously into the darkness.

Mr. Macready was now admissibly the first living tragedian; and if the anxiety of authors to obtain his assistance in the production of their pieces upon the stage

had previously been great, it was now immensely increased; and their overtures, and flatteries, and dedications, were enough to have turned the head of most men into that hallucinatory condition of mind, in which most potentates necessarily exist. Yet such is the contradictory nature of circumstances, and of theatrical circumstances above nearly all others, and such the predominating power of external *position* in this country, above every kind of internal individual capacity, that at this time Mr. Macready's position being that of an actor under that of a manager, it signified nothing that he was immeasurably superior, in himself, and in every attainment,—he was nevertheless subject to the grossest ill-treatment and insult from one of the lowest. How that unbearable condition of things terminated, is well known; and how universally did Mr. Macready carry with him the sympathy and approval of all educated men, and of all true lovers of the Drama, of common justice, and common decency, must be equally fresh in the memory of the public. There was no other alternative, and Macready became a Manager.

It is not requisite to dwell upon this gentleman's great successes in what he sought to effect, as matter of taste in the "getting up" of dramas; nor upon his repeated failure, as matter of pecuniary speculation. His influence upon the national intellect as a manager, must, however, come under discussion, together with a view of managerial influence, generally, whether in this, or any other country. Nor can we do better than quote a few remarks on the rise of the drama in Spain,—for though they are applied to the neglect experienced by Cervantes, the pith of the whole question will be seen to be one and the same.

"If the only thing requisite in order to originate, to revive, to reform, or to re-create the drama of a civilized country, was dramatic genius; if to possess the faculty and execute the work as matter of literary composition, were all that was needed to produce the effect or commence its development,—then perhaps might the name of Cervantes have stood parallel in Spain with the highest names of our dramatists of the age of Elizabeth. But between original dramatic genius, and its desired attempts, there come three powerful intermediates, any one of which may prevent the very chance of fair trial, or any trial at all,—these are the public tastes of the day, influence of capital (or the want of it), and the individual capacities and characters—in fact the private tastes of managers of theatres. The public taste may be good or vicious, its reception of new things is always a doubtful matter; capital is rarely, if ever, embarked upon a new thing of *ideal* pretensions; and to say that a particular novelty of any kind would be to the interest of a manager to produce, might be true, or untrue,—that is not the question, but what he thinks, and chooses to do; and whether he

be very wise or very ignorant, he has hitherto been 'the law,' as to what genius or talent should make its appeal to the public through the medium of the stage."*

Apart from all other considerations, that a public professing to understand, and certainly having so universal an admiration of Shakspeare, should not have sufficiently patronized a manager who displayed so much anxiety to produce his plays under the name of "revivals," with a prodigality of scenic illustrations and supernumerary appointments, all excellent, expensive, appropriate, and skilfully applied—but that, on the contrary, the public should in very few instances be found sufficiently numerous (as the paying portion of the audience) to half-fill the theatre after the excitement of the first three or four nights, so that eventually the accomplished and indefatigable manager is obliged to go to America to recover his health and retrieve his damaged fortunes,—would appear to be one of the most inexplicable problems of modern times, if not one of its deepest disgraces. Still, there must be some solution to this? Perhaps the public may not, after all, be so perverse as appears? The truth is so important to all the interests of dramatic literature and the stage, that, if it can be discovered, some hope of a remedy and a new and prosperous course might perhaps be described. A few opinions and suggestions shall therefore be offered in these concluding pages.

Whatever troubles, pertinacities, and wearisome applications Mr. Macready may have experienced from the authors of dramas previous to his becoming a manager, it cannot be doubted but that they must have multiplied prodigiously afterwards. The most improbable plots, or the most inextricable non-constructions, with characters at once monstrous and imbecile, outrageous and inconsequential, are forwarded to managers by hundreds every season, from the pens of educated, half educated, and totally uneducated men,—without the ability to put two acts, or perhaps two scenes, together with consecutive action and direct purpose; without an idea of consistency in any one character; without the least prevision of effects upon an audience; with a total disregard of what is convenient or impossible in the nature and sequence of scenery; yet each one believing that *his* play is, of all others, the most eligible

* Essay on "The Dramatic Mind of Europe," by R. H. Horne.

to the manager, and—if the notion of a “cast” occurs at all—the most eligible for the talents of the given company. The fate of all these pieces may be anticipated. But there is another class of men, who at intervals of from one to three years, transmit dramatic productions to managers. These authors are not numerous; some of them are known in the literary world, some not. They are, for the most part, solitary students of nature and the passions, of philosophy, of literature, and of art; they have worked secretly for years, and the midnight lamp and the shadow on the wall have been sole witnesses of their toils, their enthusiasms, and their aspiring dreams. Straitened in means, no doubt, they usually are, so that at last the time which they have given to preparing themselves to be worthy of some honour, needs a little remuneration. And these men are treated precisely with the same rejection and neglect as those previously described. So certainly as they have suffered themselves to be deluded by the compliments and exhortations to publish their tragedies or plays, and to renew their efforts in the same class of composition, so certainly have they been injured in the worst way; their time, their energies, and their health wasted, and in cases where the impulse was too strong to be checked, and they have had no private resources, they have been ruined. That the dramas they forwarded to managements were unskilful in some respects, dangerous in others, and wanting practical assistance in many, cannot admit of a doubt; but it is questionable if they were more unskilful, dangerous, or wanting, than those accepted and acted productions which, *with* every assistance from managers and actors, have proved ruinous to all parties.

Abundant examples might be adduced to prove this. Perhaps the two most striking would be those of “Martinuzzi” and “Plighted Troth”—the first produced under the auspices of unexperienced amateurs and conflicting practical opinions; the other produced by a most experienced management, and all governed by one head. It may be said that Mr. Macready did not incur a loss exceeding five or six hundred pounds by the disastrous failure of “Plighted Troth,” whereas the chivalrous experiment of Mr. Stephens cost him perhaps, in all, more than double that sum. Yet that was caused by his own will,—his resolve not to be con-

quered, but to play a five-act tragedy in defiance of an absurd law, and of the friends of the old managerial system; and this he did during upwards of twenty nights. "Plighted Troth," be it admitted, contained, as well as "Martinuzzi," several scenes of true dramatic genius; it was the bad judgment of all parties that made them both look so preposterous.

But if the unacted Drama be held in no regard by theatrical people, it is not much more esteemed by the majority of the public press. The slightest acted piece often has a long notice; whereas, of an unacted tragedy or comedy anything, or nothing, may be said,—and any thing with impunity.*

"But the Unacted, and consequently the unaided Drama, has at length made some progress; under every disadvantage, with every thing in its disfavour, it has made its way against its well-provided opponent. The Acted Drama, with all the aid of numerous actors, beautiful paintings, charming music—with all the dazzling fascinations that belong to public shows—with fashion, custom, and hereditary predilection in its favour,—has dwindled and degenerated, until the voice of criticism, of the Dramatists themselves, and of the intellectual part of the public, have declared it inferior in mental power to the Unacted;—have declared that, with all the facilities that practice can give, with all the means that experience and knowledge can afford, it is more essentially deficient in the *true elements* of dramatic power, than the Unacted. The Unacted Drama may have awkwardnesses, incongruities, and even absurdities, from its not having the advantages of experience and practical exercise. But that it is great in conception, powerful in expression, strong in originality, and vigorous from its freshness, is allowed. It has again dared to step within the terrific circle of the passions, and to show in appalling strife those never-dying elements of humanity."†

What with the claims of the able and the incompetent, the reasonable and the unreasonable, the men of genius and talent with a definite aim, and the men of self-delusion and a puzzled will,—the logical heads and the half insane, the sound advice of one friend, the flattering advice of another, and the retreating opinion of all, as the manager himself began to come to a decision—Mr. Macready must have had a most feverish seat of power, and a most troublesome and thankless reign. The bad success here which caused him to make a trip to America, has very possibly been the saving of his

* A professional critic, in a fit of frank cordiality, once told a certain unacted dramatist, that he had written disparagingly of his tragedy from a prejudice he had conceived against him on account of his superabundant whiskers—and he regretted it. The offending hair had since been cut off, and he was reconciled. It never struck this critic that the use of a public organ for any trivial private prejudice or purpose, was a startling confession!

† Lecture on the "Relative Value of the Acted and the Unacted Drama," by F. G. Tomlins, Secretary to the Shakspeare Society, &c.

life and health, and may be regarded as a gratulatory result by everybody, since everybody must look forward with interest to his career, which will probably be renewed in this country by fresh "revivals" of Shakspeare in one of the smaller theatres. So placed, with a less lavish expenditure in gorgeous redundancies and real upholstery, and wisely confining himself to the old established stock pieces, he would most probably be very successful; and that he would be most deservedly so, there can hardly exist a doubt. But he should carefully avoid all new pieces, and all pretence of encouraging living dramatists; first, because, instructed by long experience, he must have found that it is his destiny to select mediocrity or failure; and secondly, because he will thus cease to excite the efforts and occupy the time of men of intellect, to no purpose.

Mr. Macready's merits as an actor are far greater than his defects; let us therefore contemplate the former, chiefly. He is the first artist on the stage. On all those innumerable points of art connected with the stage, which he has studied from his youth, there is no one who possesses more knowledge or skill in their application; and no one possesses both in an equal degree. He is rarely "at home" in anything new, either of principle or practice, without long study, if then. His conception is slow, and by degrees; nor does it ever attain beyond a certain point. That point is the extremity of all that his study and practice can discover and embody; and it is very much. He has no revelations of genius, no inspirations except those which are unconsciously "given off" at times from great physical energies. If he had any such revelations, he would adopt them doubtfully, and partially, and so defeat their essential meaning. But when he does embrace the whole of a character (such as William Tell, Coriolanus, Iago, Cardinal Wolsey, King John,) he leaves little undone, and all the rest to admire, in the highest degree. He dresses to perfection. He is the only man on the stage who seems to have a fine eye for true harmony of colour. Sometimes he has allowed splendid dresses to be destroyed by an equally splendid back-ground of similar colour, but never when he himself is in front of it. If he wore but a blanket, he would have a back-ground that should make that blanket the most gracious object the eye could rest

upon—perhaps the focus of all attraction. He reads poetry very badly, as to rhythm—broken up—without melody—harsh—unmusical—shattered prose; and yet he speaks with exquisite distinctness, and very impressively, because he is thoroughly in earnest. There is great finish in all he does—a definite aim, clearly worked out—and those who find little to admire in his acting, the fault is in them.

As a manager he has unexampled merits in his attempt to separate the theatres from their long-established union with bare-faced licentiousness. It is to his great and lasting honour that he is the first manager who seems ever to have felt that Art has nothing in common with “the town.” Great merit is also due to him for his indefatigable industry and attention to all the business of the theatre. One instance of his thoughtful care, though to the outside of the walls, should be noticed: he successfully defeated *the brutality which characterizes an English audience in entering the pit on crowded nights*; and the public, especially the female portion, should be grateful for so needful an attention. His exertions to improve the stage arrangements and appointments, are well known; they extended from broad effects down to the minutest details,—perhaps the former were sometimes injured by the latter. He made the supernumeraries *act*—a mortal labour. He not only multiplied the brood of these “turkeys,” but he crammed them, and made men and women of them. It has been currently reported—probably on no better grounds than because he does not sing the drinking song of Iago—that Mr. Macready does not understand, or care for music. This can hardly be true: he has introduced music amidst the Shakspearean dialogue, and at “times and seasons” in a far more poetical way than any other manager. He has applied fine scenery and dioramic effects to Shakspeare more appropriately to the sense of the words, than were ever done before; but as to the effect upon the action (excepting in the Chronicle plays where the want of action might justify extraneous aid,) and as to the effect upon the poetry, in all cases, there can be no doubt that both are injured by the predominating, and sometimes overwhelming effect upon the external senses—not intended by the poet. As a manager of business, and in all agreements and pecuniary dealings,

Mr. Macready has always been liberal, generous, thoroughly to be relied upon, and of unimpeachable integrity.

But the merits of an individual, as an actor or manager, or both, however great and meritorious, must necessarily be a small matter in themselves compared with their influence and effect upon one of the highest departments of the literature of a great nation. This, on the whole, in Mr. Macready's case, may be pronounced as good—an aggregate advantage, though bad in its individual instances. Good, inasmuch as it has largely assisted in stirring up the dramatic Spirit of the country; bad, inasmuch as, with some three or four exceptions, it has led to nothing but labour in vain. He has advised or exhorted nearly every author who sent him a drama of any pretensions, to publish it—and write another,—write another by all means—that he *could* do the thing if he would,—why did he not? &c. Mr. Macready, throughout his whole career, has produced on the stage no great or standard work of dramatic genius; or, if “*Ion*” and “*Virginius*” be regarded as exceptions, who will name a third?—and he has wasted the time of more men of genius and talent than any other individual on record.

Mr. Macready shares a part of the latter accusation with high authorities for precedent. Even Garrick did not produce on the stage any new stock tragedy of the first class; nor did the Kemble family, nor did Edmund Kean. These facts seem to lead to the conclusion that managers and actors, when unassisted by established reputations, have no taste for anything beyond second and third-rate plays. It is in vain to say they could find no better than they produced. Too truly they could not. No one finds that which he has no soul to search for, or no eye to perceive. The great discoveries in the physical world by men of science were not their inventions; the things were there before they searched. They discovered the things they sought, because they knew them when they saw them; and the powers of nature are not limited to any particular age. The “mighty dead” are not mighty *because* they are dead—though it would seem that so many people think so. They were once alive, and laughed at.

Mr. Macready's character (we deal only with such elements of it as are directly or indirectly of public

influence.) is made up of stronger opposites than is usual, however common those antagonisms are in forcible characters. He has great energies of action, and a morbid will. He has a limited imagination, with a large ambition. His imagination is slow and dull of vision, but quick and sensitive to feel. It, therefore, continually misleads him beyond retreat. For this reason, his hasty judgments are always wrong, and his slow judgments futile from exhausted impulses. In these respects he has been much assisted by Mr. Serle. It is evidently the opinion of this gentleman that a cold dispassionate judgment is the only popular test of excited imaginations. His advice, therefore, is always judicious, and ineffectual. But it is quite a mistake to suppose that Mr. Macready is misled by the advice of friends. We are aware that Mr. Forster and Mr. Serle have been commonly accused of this; but we think very unjustly. Mr. Macready takes no advice but that which backs his own opinion. His constant errors in judgment show that they proceed from the same man. His spirit is a hot-headed steed, capable of leaping great conclusions; but he wants faith in those things, and in himself, which would enable him to succeed greatly; and when he does leap, he makes up for a long arrear of doubts by wilfulness, and "falls on the other side." He has genial feelings, but a morbid fancy which troubles them. It pains him to laugh. His temperament is impetuous, his hopes dreary, his purposes high-minded, his opinions conflicting, and "his luck against him," with his own assistance. He boldly incurred the odium of allowing Anti-Corn-law meetings in Covent Garden, besides giving an arm-sweeping slash at recent taxations in a farewell address; and he made a speech to the poor Duke of Cambridge, on receiving a "testimonial," at which all his best friends blushed, and he himself, before the farce was concluded, which had cost so much pains to get up, wished a large trap-door would unbolt itself beneath his feet. As a patron of modern dramatic literature, he has been totally mistaken by others, and the less he ever attempts of this kind in future, the better for all parties. As a supporter of the Shakspearean drama, and all the fine old "stock pieces," he has not been encouraged according to his deserts; and, with all his faults, the want of sufficient patronage in his own country, is discreditable to the age.

Few men ever had the sympathies of the public more completely in their power than Sheridan Knowles. Scarcely any imprudence or deficiency that he could be guilty of, in a new play, would cause the audience to damn it, though they might not go again to see it. With Macready the case is different. He always has enemies in the "house," and a large party, or parties, against him out of the "house." Some for one thing, some for another, abstract or personal, private or public. Strong and unfailing friends he also has, and they form a party, though comparatively a small one, and rapidly decreasing. Like all very anxious men, Mr. Macready, besides his bad judgment, is unlucky; and Mr. Knowles, like all careless men, is usually in good luck, notwithstanding his equal deficiency in judgment. The one "darkens averse" at all critical strictures, the other calls every critic he meets "my dear boy." Mr. Macready has had, however, to endure many ill-natured and personal remarks and insinuations from various parties—some who were, and others who thought they were aggrieved by him; and, on the other hand, he has had the advantage of more assistance, systematic and instant to his need, from the public press, than almost any other individual of his day. If those who have publicly uttered anonymous complaints against him were known, with all their affairs in relation to him, there would be a better means of judging the case among all parties; and, on the other hand, if his public applauders and supporters were known, with all their affairs in relation to him, there would be a better means of judging among all parties. As it is, all the parties must "fret it out," till, sooner or later, a change comes over the whole scene—some grand general explosion takes place—the atmosphere clears, and a fair, open field for dramatists may then give them the means of proving their existence.

So great are the difficulties attending five-act pieces, either tragedies, comedies, or plays, that there is no instance of a successful author in them, throughout our literature of the present day. No, there is not one. Shall we mention Mr. Sheridan Knowles, who has written three or four times as many five-act pieces as any other author, all of which have been acted? What is his success? One tragedy, scarcely ever played now; and two comedies. His last *four* dramas have been dead failures, notwithstanding their fine detached scenes.

dialogues, and genuine poetry. Shall we name Sir E. L. Bulwer? With all the professional friendship and assistance he has had from Mr. Macready and others, and notwithstanding his great ingenuity, and tact, and versatile skill, his dramatic list presents marked failures, with two exceptions, only one of which is now acted. Mr. Serjeant Talfourd's success rests upon one tragedy, seldom acted. As for the many great "discoveries" of Mr. Macready, they have vanished for ever. We allude to such equivocal tragedies as "Mary Stewart," "Plighted Troth," the much-puffed "Gisippus!" &c., &c. There has never been in our own times one successful acted dramatist of the higher class. Yet some of these writers (as well as others less known, or not known at all) are probably able to achieve many successes, could they have practically mastered their art. To do this there is no opportunity. The difficulties of the art are not greater than the difficulty of obtaining any sufficient means of study and experiment. The man who has succeeded most profitably, is the one who has had most of these means and "appliances."

There are no doubt a dozen good collateral causes for the decline of the acted drama; but those at the root of the matter are simply these—that the actors, who never did, and never can, originate or contribute to, a Dramatic Literature, have got the exclusive power of the stage;—that authors of genius have no free access to the stage for the production of pieces that originate in their *own* strongest impulses;—and that nearly all critical literature is arrayed against them by reason of the total disbelief in their practicable existence, or the possible composition of actable dramas which are not *seen*. We need seek no more causes than these. There is a body without a soul; and the body has got the visible position.

The Drama (meaning its *literature*,) like the Age, has been at the lowest, and both are manifestly rising to a purer taste. Whether the circumstances of modern society and civilization are eventful enough to give new incidents to the Drama, may be doubted. If not, it must and will, in future, take a more imaginative and philosophical tone.

A visible Drama more nearly allied to the universal genius of the age must arise now that physical restraints are removed by the late legislation. The new

order of dramatists, both acted and unacted, only await the man, come when he may, who, having the material means in his power, shall mould a form congenial to the present spirit of the age; and this once done, the abundant existing dramatic genius will gather round it, and the Drama again become popular. It will of course be understood, that no removal of legal restrictions, nor any other outward circumstances can bring about a new dramatic period, unless dramatists have a ready access to theatres, and the services of the best actors. Without these, any possible number of the most genuine dramatists would not be of the least avail. They would be like disembodied souls; or like a waggon load of gold on the wrong side of a turnpike, where gold was not recognized.

But with these necessary aids, a Drama will again be created. Theories that have long oppressed it, circumstances that have stunted and destroyed it, are rapidly passing away. The hope that external circumstances could re-ignite it, must now be for ever abandoned. Actor and actress, manager and mountebank, bandmaster and speculator, one after another, fail to do so; and the hope of their being ever able to effect a revival of the Drama, or a dramatic success of any kind,—the most pertinacious of those fallacies clung to by those who call themselves “the practical men,”—is now utterly extinguished. The utmost that Garrick effected—perhaps the most generally accomplished and versatile actor that ever lived—was merely to make the theatre fashionable, and “a rage.” If it be true that he also improved or even created a better taste, he did nothing to produce or aid the creation of *the thing tasted*. It was there before him. The same may be said of the Kembles; and of Edmund Kean. Much more has been aimed at by Mr. Macready, but not with much better success. Shakspeare improved the Drama of his time, and created fresh dramas. An actor can only improve or injure taste. Mr. Macready has done both—improved taste in poetical scenery, and the “getting up,” and injured it in almost confirming the taste for expensive upholstery and display. The imagination of creative dramatists can alone call forth any new spirit and form of Drama. The most profuse and admirable external aids can only foster mediocrity, and are so far detrimental because they dazzle and mislead

the public judgment till it cannot distinguish the essential from the extraneous.

That the good management of a theatre requires the power to be vested in one man, is no doubt true; and perhaps—when we look at the discordant and conflicting talents, vanities, and interests, all in vigorous motion—his power should be almost despotic. But how far it is good for such management to be vested in a principal actor, in full possession of his acting faculties, is another question. Instead of enlarging the sphere of the drama, he is sure to narrow it to his own exclusive standard. Instead of rendering it universal, he will make it particular. Instead of a reflexion of humanity, it will become the pampered image of an individual. “I cannot *see myself* in this part,” is a favourite expression of Mr. Farren’s when he does not like a new play; and may be taken as a general characteristic of all the “stars.” The stars, however, are disappearing, and with them the long suite of their retainers, the scenery-mongers, decorators, restorers, tailors, antiquarians, upholsterers, who have had their day. Capitalists have backed them with unbounded wealth; experience has lent them all her aid; trickery all her cunning; puffery all her placards, bills, paragraphs, and the getting up of “stories;” the press all its hundred tongues, telling of their nightly doings—besides the special tongues in cases where a public organ has been a private engine—and what has been the result? Bankruptcies, failures, dispersions, flights, half-salaries, no salaries, farewell dinners, debts, prisons,—and fresh candidates for the fatal seat. The fresh candidate, who in most cases is a fine old hand at a failure, usually finds a fresh capitalist to back him. “He is a man of *such* practical experience!” says the capitalist. Moon-calf! of *what* is his experience? Are not the practical *results* of all his efforts precisely of a kind to make every capitalist in his rational senses, start back from his disastrous “experience?” But there is also another peculiarity attached to a managerial lease-holder. He pays people if he can; if he cannot, he laughs in their faces. Anybody else would be arrested, or knocked down, or something. He stands in a sporting attitude; and nothing happens to him! Every now and then, when a dashing speculating sort of “man about town” finds himself totally without money, and does not know

what in the world to do next; he says to himself,—“Damme! I’ll take a theatre!” Very likely he will find backers with money as soon as he has taken it; in any case, the proprietors are all too happy to let him the house. He invariably fails. Some are paid, many not. Who cares? That dashing speculator is not a scamp, “bless your heart!”—but an excellent good fellow. He has such enterprise in him!—such experience! Why, the impudent rogue absolutely risked nothing—he had nothing to risk. Oh, but he has such enterprise! And thus with two unexamined catch-words—enterprise and experience—the proprietors of theatres, and the poor mooncalf capitalist, delude and injure themselves and the public.

How totally inapplicable to Mr. Macready must be any of the preceding remarks, with reference to pecuniary dealings, need not be repeated; it is the more to be regretted that the system he pursued of profuse expenditure upon extrinsic adornments, was of a kind which never can prove successful, and which, for his sake, as well as that of the poetry of the Drama, we most earnestly trust he will never repeat.

During periods when the Drama and the stage have been almost at the last ebb, it should be recollected that Sheridan Knowles and Mr. Macready have continually exerted themselves to open new springs, or recal the retiring waters. If in vain, their indefatigable energies are at least worthy of admiration. Both have now been before the public these twenty-five or thirty years, and have well earned the estimation they have obtained. Mr. Knowles commenced his career as an actor, but has some time since abandoned it. He is still in vigorous life, and full of excellent spirits—poetical, convivial, and Hibernian. In private he is a prodigious favourite with all who know him; frank, burly, smiling, offhand, voluble, and saying whatever comes uppermost; with a large heart beating under a great broad and deep chest, not easily accessible to care or trouble, but constitutionally jovial and happy. Mr. Macready in private is good-natured, easy, unaffected, without the least attempt at display, extremely gentleman-like, habitually grave, and constitutionally saturnine. His smile is melancholy, and his expression is occasionally of great kindness. He speaks little; with frequent hesitation, but well: with good sense, and

enlarged and benevolent sympathies, moral and political. His views of art are confused between the real and ideal. Mr. Knowles occasionally delivers Lectures on the Drama, which are conspicuous for no philosophy or art, and an abundance of good humour and the warmest admiration of his favourite authors.

MISS E. B. BARRETT

AND

MRS. NORTON.

Flower of the Soul ! emblem of sentient Thoughts,
With prayer on prayer to chorded harps ascending,
Till at the clouded Portals, humbly bending,
They, like the holy martyrs' pale cohorts,
Wait solemnly—while sounds of dew descending
Their presence recognise, approve, and bless ;—
Flower ! shedding fragrance from a dark recess,
Thy roots lie passive on this mortal soil ;
Thy beauty blooms on high—serene beyond our coil !”

“ As one who drinks from a charmed cup
Of foaming and sparkling and murmuring wine,
Which a mighty Enchantress, filling up,
Invites to love with her lips divine.”—SHELLEY.

“ Thy Mind shines through thee like a radiant sun,
Although thy body be a beauteous cloud.”

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

It is anything but handsome towards those who were criticised, or fair towards the adventurous critic, to regard, as some have done, the article on “Modern English Poetesses,” which appeared a few years ago in the “Quarterly Review,” as a tribute merely of admiration. It was a tribute of justice ; and hardly that, because nine ladies were reviewed, of very different kind and degree of merit, all in the same article. Eight were allowed to wear their laurels ; the ninth fell a victim. Passing over the victim, who shall be nameless, we will say, that the poetical genius, the impassioned fervour, the knowledge of genuine nature and of society, of books, of languages, of all that is implied by the term of accomplishment, and, “though last, not least,” the highly cultivated talent in the poetic art, displayed by the other eight, are such as to entitle them to a higher position than several of the “received” poets of the past and present centuries.

The list we have named comprises, Mrs. Norton ; Miss E. B. Barrett ; Maria del Occidente ; Lady Northampton (author of “Irene”) ; Caroline Southey ; Miss Lowe ; the Author of “IX Poems ;” Sara Coleridge ;

and one other, a lady of rank, whom it was a pity to introduce in company where she has no *claim* to rank. The reviewer proposed to make a wreath of them after the manner of Meleager, and appropriately commenced with Mrs. Norton as "*the Rose*, or, if she like it, *Loveliest-a-bleeding*;" and Miss Barrett as "*Greek Valerian*, or *Ladder to Heaven*, or, if she pleases, *Wild Angelica*." The former lady is well known, personally, to a large and admiring circle, and is also extensively known to the reading public by her works. The latter lady, or "fair shade"—whichever she may be—is not known personally, to anybody, we had almost said; but her poetry is known to a highly intellectual class, and she "lives" in constant correspondence with many of the most eminent persons of the time. When, however, we consider the many strange and ingenious conjectures that are made in after years, concerning authors who appeared but little among their contemporaries, or of whose biography little is actually known, we should not be in the least surprised, could we lift up our ear out of our grave a century hence, to hear some learned Thebans expressing shrewd doubts as to whether such an individual as Miss E. B. Barrett had ever really existed. Letters and notes, and exquisite English lyrics, and perhaps a few elegant Latin verses, and spirited translations from *Æschylus*, might all be discovered under that name; but this would not prove that such a lady had ever dwelt among us. Certain admirable and erudite prose articles on the "*Greek Christian Poets*," might likewise be ascertained by the exhumation of sundry private letters and documents, touching periodical literature, to have been from the hand of that same "*Valerian*;" but neither the poetry, nor the prose, nor the delightfully gossiping notes to fair friends, nor the frank correspondence with scholars, such as Lady Jane Grey might have written to Roger Ascham—no, not even if the great-grandson of some learned Jewish doctor could show a note in Hebrew (quite a likely thing really to be extant) with the same signature, darkly translated by four letters—nay, though he should display as a relic treasured in his family, the very pen, with its oblique Hebraic nib, that wrote it—not any one, nor all of those things could be sufficient to demonstrate the fact, that such a lady had really adorned the present century.

In such *chiaroscuro*, therefore, as circumstances permit, we will endeavour to offer sufficient grounds for our readers' belief, to the end that posterity may at least have the best authorities and precedents we can furnish. Confined entirely to her own apartment, and almost hermetically sealed, in consequence of some extremely delicate state of health, the poetess of whom we write is scarcely seen by any but her own family. But though thus separated from the world—and often, during many weeks at a time, in darkness almost equal to that of night, Miss Barrett has yet found means by extraordinary inherent energies to develope her inward nature; to give vent to the soul in a successful struggle with its destiny while on earth; and to attain and master more knowledge and accomplishments than are usually within the power of those of either sex who possess every adventitious opportunity, as well as health and industry. Six or seven years of this imprisonment she has now endured, not with vain repinings, though deeply conscious of the loss of external nature's beauty; but with resignation, with patience, with cheerfulness, and generous sympathies towards the world without;—with indefatigable “work” by thought, by book, by the pen, and with devout faith, and adoration, and a high and hopeful waiting for the time when this mortal frame “putteth on immortality.”

The period when a strong prejudice existed against learned ladies and “blues” has gone by, some time since; yet in case any elderly objections may still exist on this score, or that some even of the most liberal-minded readers may entertain a degree of doubt as to whether a certain austere exclusiveness and ungenial pedantry might infuse a slight tinge into the character of ladies possessing Miss Barrett's attainments, a few words may be added to prevent erroneous impressions on this score. Probably no living individual has a more extensive and diffuse acquaintance with literature—that of the present day inclusive—than Miss Barrett. Although she has read Plato, in the original, from beginning to end, and the Hebrew Bible from Genesis to Malachi (nor suffered her course to be stopped by the Chaldean), yet there is probably not a single good romance of the most romantic kind in whose marvellous and impossible scenes she has not delighted, over the fortunes of whose immaculate or incredible heroes and heroines she has not wept;

nor a clever novel or fanciful sketch of our own day, over the brightest pages of which she has not smiled inwardly, or laughed outright, just as their authors themselves would have desired. All of this, our readers may be assured that we believe to be as strictly authentic as the very existence of the lady in question, although, as we have already confessed, we have no absolute knowledge of this fact. But lest the reader should exclaim, "Then, *after all*, there really may be no such person!" we should bear witness to having been shown a letter of Miss Mitford's to a friend, from which it was plainly to be inferred that she had actually seen and conversed with her. The date has unfortunately escaped us.

We cannot admit that any picture, engraving, or other portrait of Mrs. Norton with which the public has been favoured does full justice to the original; nevertheless they may be considered as likenesses, to a certain extent, and by reason of these, and her popular position as an authoress, any introductory remarks on the present occasion would be needless.

There are few poems which would be more acceptable to the majority of lovers of poetry than Mrs. Norton's "Dream," from which we make the following extract;—

"Oh! Twilight! Spirit that does render birth
To dim enchantments; melting heaven with earth,
Leaving on craggy hills and running streams
A softness like the atmosphere of dreams;
Thy hour to all is welcome! Faint and sweet
Thy light falls round the peasant's homeward feet,
Who, slow returning from his task of toil,
Sees the low sunset gild the cultured soil,
And, tho' such radiance round him brightly glows,
Marks the small spark his cottage window throws,
Still as his heart forestals his weary pace,
Fondly he dreams of each familiar face,
Recalls the treasures of his narrow life,
His rosy children and his sunburnt wife,
To whom *his* coming is the chief event
Of simple days in cheerful labour spent.
The rich man's chariot hath gone whirling past,
And these poor cottagers have only cast
One careless glance on all that show of pride,
Then to their tasks turn'd quietly aside;
But *him* they wait for, him they welcome home,
Fixed sentinels look forth to see him come;
The fagot sent for when the fire grew dim,
The frugal meal prepared, are all for him;
For him the watching of that sturdy boy,
For him those smiles of tenderness and joy,
For him—who plods his sauntering way along,
Whistling the fragment of some village song!"

The above is characteristic of a style in which Mrs. Norton excels, and it is a popular error to regard her solely as the poetess of impassioned personalities, great as she undoubtedly has shown herself in such delineations.

The next extract is from Miss Barrett's "Seraphim," where Ador, a seraph, exhorts Zerah not to linger nor look through the closed gate of heaven, after the Voice had said "Go!"

"Thou—wherefore dost thou wait?
 Oh! gaze not backward, brother mine;
 The deep love in thy mystic eyne
 Deepening inward, till is made
 A copy of the earth-love shade—
 Oh! gaze not through the gate!
 God filleth heaven with God's own solitude
 Till all its pavements glow!
 His Godhead being no more subdued
 By itself, to glories low
 Which seraphs can sustain,
 What if thou in gazing so,
 Should behold but only one
 Attribute, the veil undone—
 And that the one to which we press
 Nearest, for its gentleness—
 Ay! His love!
 How the deep ecstatic pain
 Thy being's strength would capture!
 Without a language for the rapture,
 Without a music strong to come,
 And set th' adoring free;
 For ever, ever, wouldst thou be
 Amid the general chorus dumb,—
 God-stricken, in seraphic agony!—
 Or, brother, what if on thine eyes
 In vision bare should rise
 The life-fount whence his hand did gather
 With solitary force
 Our immortalities!—
 Straightway how thine own would wither,
 Falter like a human breath,—
 And *shrink into a point like death,*
 By gazing on its source!

We cannot do better, we think, than attempt to display the different characteristics of the genius of the two highly-gifted women who form the subject of the present paper, by placing them in such harmonious juxtaposition as may be most advantageous to both, and convey the clearest synthetical impression to the reader.

The prominent characteristics of these two poetesses may be designated as the struggles of woman towards happiness, and the struggles of a soul towards heaven. The one is oppressed with a sense of injustice, and

feels the need of human love; the other is troubled with a sense of mortality, and aspires to identify herself with etherial existences. The one has a certain tinge of morbid despondency taking the tone of complaint and the amplification of private griefs; the other too often displays an energetic morbidity on the subject of death, together with a certain predilection for "terrors." The imagination of Mrs. Norton is chiefly occupied with domestic feelings and images, and breathes melodious plaints or indignations over the desecrations of her sex's loveliness; that of Miss Barrett often wanders amidst the supernatural darkness of Calvary sometimes with anguish and tears of blood, sometimes like one who echoes the songs of triumphal quires. Both possess not only great mental energies, but that description of strength which springs from a fine nature, and manifests itself in productions which evidently originated in genuine impulses of feeling. The subjects they both choose appear spontaneous, and not resulting from study or imitation, though cast into careful moulds of art. Both are excellent artists: the one in dealing with subjects of domestic interest; the other in designs from sacred subjects, poems of religious tendency, or of the supernatural world. Mrs. Norton is beautifully clear and intelligible in her narrative and course of thought and feeling; Miss Barrett has great inventiveness, but not an equal power in construction. The one is all womanhood; the other all wings. The one writes from the dictates of a human heart in all the eloquence of beauty and individuality; the other like an inspired priestess—not without a most truthful heart, but a heart that is devoted to religion, and whose individuality is cast upward in the divine afflatus, and dissolved and carried off in the recipient breath of angelic ministrants.

Some of Mrs. Norton's songs for music are very lovely, and other of her lyrics have the qualities of sweetness and pathos to a touching and thrilling degree. One of the domestic poems in the "Dream and other poems," is a striking composition. The personal references in the miscellaneous poems are deep and true, and written with unaffected tenderness. She has contributed many prose tales full of colour and expression to several of the *Annals*; but these, together with her musical talents and editorial labours, are much too popularly known and admired to render any further remarks that we could offer upon them at all requisite.

BANIM

AND

THE IRISH NOVELISTS.

"Great heart, and bright humours, my masters ; with a wit that never lingers, and a sorrow that sits with her head under one wing."—OLD COMEDY.

"Certes, sir, your painted eloquence,
So gay, so fresh, and eke so talkative,
It doth transcend the wit of Dame Prudence
For to declare your thought or to describe,
So gloriously glad language ye contrive."—CHAUCER.

"Could he dance on the head of him, and think with his heels, then were he a blessed spirit."—OLD IRELAND.

"*Och, Shane, Fadh—Shane Fadh, a cushla machree!* you're going to break up the ring—going to lave us, avourneen, for ivver, and we to hear your light foot and sweet voice, morning, noon, and night, no more !"—CARLETON.

THE author of the "O'Hara Tales" stands pre-eminent among the delineators of Irish character, and quite distinct from the mere painters of Irish manners. He goes to the very heart and soul of the matter. He is neither the eulogist nor the vilifier, neither the patronizing apologist, nor the caricaturist of his countrymen, but their true dramatic historian. Fiction such as his, is truer than any history, because it deals not only in facts and their causes, but with the springs of motive and action. It not only details circumstances, but probes into and discovers the living elements on which circumstances operate. His Irishmen are not strange, unaccountable creatures, but members of the great human family, with a temperament of their own, marking a peculiar race, and his Irishwomen are in especial drawn with the utmost truth and depth of feeling. He knows well the sources of those bitter waters which have converted the impulsive, generous, simple-minded, humorous, and irascible race with whom he has to deal, into lawless ruffians, or unprincipled knaves. He loves to paint the national character in its genial state, ardent in love, constant in friendship, with a ready tear for the mourner, and a ready laugh for the reveller,

overflowing with gratitude for kindness, with open hand and heart, and unsuspecting as a child; and reversing the picture, to show that same character goaded by oppression and contemptuous injustice, into a cruel mocking demon in human form, or into some reckless, libertine, idle, hopeless tattered rascal. The likeness cannot be disputed. The description carries internal evidence with it. Whoever has been in Ireland remembers illustrations of it, and begins to discover the how and the why of things which before puzzled him. Even those who have never been in Ireland, cannot have gone through their lives without observing the cheerfulness, humour, and gaiety of its natives, even under depressing circumstances, their natural politeness, the warmth of their gratitude, their ready helpfulness, all evidences of a character to be moulded into excellent good form by love and kindness. The reverse of the picture need not be dwelt on. It is the theme of all the world. Irish reprobates and Irish criminals are plentiful. Banim and some few others can teach why they are so.

In the small compass of nine pages of Banim's admirable story called "Crohoore of the Bill-Hook," there is contained what may be called the natural history of "White-boyism," and in those pages is comprised the philosophy of the whole matter, with its illustrations in human tears and drops of blood. In the vivid and exciting description of the White-boy outrage on the tithe-proctor, where the remorseless cruelty is rendered more revolting by its accompaniment of the never-absent Irish humour that makes the torturer comfort his wretched victim before he cuts off his ears, with "Don't be the last uneasy in yourself, a-gra; you may be right sartin, I'll do the thing nate and handy"—how finely does the author claim and obtain impartial justice for the perpetrators, at the tribunal of eternal truth, by the few words with which he prefaces his dreadful narrative. "The legal retribution" says he "visited on Damien and Ravailac has found its careful registers: nor in this transcript of real scenes, shall the illegal violence done to an Irish tithe-proctor, want true and courageous historians." Who that has ever had his soul sickened by even a glance into the cold methodical detail of the exquisite tortures, that were each day, and day after day, applied to Ravailac—the pincers, the fire, the

rack, the screw—while the “Do not drive my soul to despair!” shrieked out in vain, except to be recorded by the witnessing secretary—every agonized exclamation being carefully noted—who does not feel the force of those words? Despotism had transformed these legal and highly-polished tormentors into devils. Ignorance, wrong, and ruin had converted those illegal and outcast men of impulse, into mocking savages. Individual character and varied circumstance, acting and re-acting discordantly, these make up the mystery of human woe. Rise to a sufficient elevation, and the criminals might be seen to change places, or all fade into one mass of suffering wanderers in the dark, concerning whom horror and hatred would turn into deep pity; and tears and an effort to save take the place of retribution.

We have been dwelling on the darker and stronger portraits in Banim's works. As an illustration of the humorous, we may take “Andy Houlahan,” in the same story of “Crohoore.” There he stands, true to the life. “Tall, square, slight, loose, bony,” as if he had been put together by chance; “looking like a bold but imperfect sketch of a big fellow;” his “skin fitting tight to his high cheek-bones;” his “expression of good-humour, foolishness, fidget, and subtlety;” his clothes looking as if “they had been tossed on with a pitchfork;” his hat, “that part of every man's costume in its shape and adjustment most redolent of character,” going through all the varieties of adjustment, from being “pushed back to the last holding point of his skull” to being “dragged down into his eyes” according to the mood of the wearer; his long outside coat fallen from his shoulders, pinioning his arms and trailing in the dust or mud; the buttons at his knees, collar, and vest unfastened; his stockings “festooning down to his brogues.” Now, of this Andy Houlahan, it is just what is to be expected that he should perpetrate a succession of well-meant blunders, and so he does. He is brave to recklessness in real danger, but as to witches, ghosts, and fairies, an arrant coward; the most loving and faithful creature in the world, yet marring and counteracting every effort to serve the friend he loves best in the world, and nearly getting him hanged at last; then, (after his friend has been saved by other intervention,) pulling down the gallows, and stamping the coffin to shivers; and con-

cluding by startling all the assembled magistrates in grave discussion, by his loud "whoop," when he sees his friend made all right and happy at last; for which finishing stroke he must give his own excuse, "It's a fashion we have in screechin' that a way, when we're glad, or sorry, or a thing o' the kind."

Banim's conception of his subject is equal to his skill in the development of character. He has always a definite aim and purpose, and always a plot. However elaborately he may finish his individual figures, they are always skilfully grouped, and all the groups together make an harmonious whole. His management of his subject is equally fine. He invests it with an interest, humorous, terrible, or pathetic. We are sufficiently behind the scenes to feel with and for his characters, and to attach due importance to his incidents, yet he does not disclose his "mystery" till the proper moment. "Crohoore," is an excellent illustration of this. We defy any one, unless he resort to the unjustifiable expedient of "looking at the end," to divine how all will be explained to his heart's ease and thorough satisfaction at last.

The thrilling interest attached to the history of the young priest in "The Nowlans," affords another instance of the power and passion with which this author works out his conceptions. The struggle between nature and conscience, unnaturally opposed as they are by the vow of celibacy, is here rendered more terrible in its effect by the youth and the ardent, impetuous character of the priest, which fight desperately against his high sense of duty and devotion to his faith. The lovely and refined character of Lettey, her sweet, tender, trustful, artless, self-sacrificing spirit, and her excessive yet trembling love for him, obliterating from her consciousness all thought of her own superior station and fortune—all this enhances the deadly effort it cost them to part for ever, engages our deepest sympathies, and carries us along with them in their horror-stricken flight *together*, when that interview which they had meant to be their last on earth, has united their fates for ever. Then follow the cruel persecution of the world, the vain struggle with its anathema, and the final tragedy—the lone waste cabin in the lone field surrounded by the darkness of night, by the snow and winter wind; the door torn from its hinges and raised

on four stones from off the wet floor ; upon it the corpse of the beautiful young woman clasping the dead infant to her breast ; the rushlight stuck in a lump of yellow clay flickering by their side ; at their feet, the young man, kneeling—his face pale as their's, "with unwinking distended eyes rivetted on the lowly bier."

"The Nowlans" is, perhaps, the finest of Banim's works ; but they are all more or less stamped with genius. We could dwell on many more of them ; they are, however, all before the public and well known, and their peculiar characteristics are similar to those we have enumerated in this short sketch of "Crohoore" and "The Nowlans."

Lover is a very forcibly effective, and truthful writer of Irish novels, and falls into the ranks after Banim. He has less passion, but more picturesque vivacity. As a writer and composer of songs (not to mention the charming expression with which he sings them) Mr. Lover is perhaps still more popular, and his ballads have a certain singable beauty in them, and a happy occasional fancifulness. His novels, however, are the stuff whereof his fame is made, and they are highly vital, and of great value in the sense of commentary on the national character.

Who ever read Rory O'More from beginning to end, without being seized with many a fit of uncontrollable laughter, and also shedding some tears?—or who ever began to read it, and left off without reading to the end? Genuine pathos, and as genuine fun—a true love of nature, and simple true-heartedness—are all there ; and the dialogues are exquisite, and full of Irish humour.

The writings of William Carleton must not be omitted. If Banim may be characterized as the dramatic historian of his countrymen, Carleton may with equal truth be styled their faithful portrait-painter. He draws from the life. In his manly and unaffected introduction to "Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry," he has given his auto-biography, and explained how it is he can so accurately describe, because he was himself one of them :—A good reason for his knowledge ; but in himself is the power to use it with talent and effect.

The Irish Tales of Mrs. S. C. Hall have character and life, tenderness and softness. She has written one or two novels ; but the performances she is better known by, are her miscellaneous light essays or tales,

with which the periodical literature of the day is sown abundantly, and the characteristic sketches illustrative of her native Ireland, of which she published a volume not long ago, in conjunction with her husband. Her miscellaneous sketches, in general, are graceful, and womanly in the most amiable sense.

Lever, well known in the popular literature of the day as "Harry Lorrequer," writes Irish novels too, and therefore is mentioned in this place. He has a large circle of readers, and many of them would say they prefer him to anybody else; but if you tried to elicit from them one good reason, they would have no better answer to give than "Oh! he's a capital fellow!" What the French call *material life*, is the whole life he recognizes; and *that* life is a jest, and a very loud one, in his philosophy. The sense of beauty and love he does not recognize at all, except in our modern condition of social animals. To read him is like sitting in the next room to an orgie of gentlemen toppers, with their noisy gentility and 'hip! hip! hurras!' and the rattling din of plates and glasses. In his way, he is a very clever writer, nobody can deny; but he is contracted and conventional, and unrefined in his line of conventionality. His best descriptions are of military life. He is most at home in the mess-room. He has undoubted humour and a quick talent of invention of comic scenes, which generally end in broad farce. He does not represent fairly even the social and jovial side of men of much refinement, or, if he does, he should not represent them as he does, on *all* sides thus social and jovial.

"A capital fellow"—is Lorrequer accounted by his readers, and that expression we take to be the most compact and complete estimate of him. The sort of reader for Harry Lorrequer, is one of those right jovial blades who can dismiss his six dozen of oysters and a tankard of stout "after the play," and then adjourn with some other capital fellows to brandy-and-water and a Welsh rabbit, pleasantly relieved by poached eggs, and cigars, and a comic song; yet rise the next morning without a fraction of headache, without the knowledge of a stomach, and go to breakfast with a fox-hunter.

The present period is certainly destined to display a singular variety, not only in the classes of literary pro-

duction, but in the different modifications of each class. We think the most omniverous reader would be decomposed by the contrasts, if for his morning's reading he took alternately a chapter from *Banim*, a chapter from *Lady Morgan's "Wild Irish Girl,"* a chapter from *Mrs. S. C. Hall's "Irish Tales,"* a high-brogue chapter from *Lover's "Rory O'More,"* an after-dinner scene from *Harry Lorrequer*, and concluded by going to a wake or a wedding with *Carleton*.

A A

ROBERT BROWNING AND J. W. MARSTON.

"One midnight dark a Spirit electric came,
And shot an invisible arrow through the sky!"

* * * * *

"A poet hidden in the light of thought."

"The art of the poet is to separate from the fable whatever does not essentially belong to it; whatever, in the daily necessities of real life, and the petty occupations to which they give rise, interrupts the progress of important actions.—A. W. SCHLZGEL. *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature.*

"Break, Phantasy, from thy cave of cloud,
And spread thy purple wings!
Now all thy figures are allowed,
And various shapes of things."—BEN JONSON.

THE spirit of passionate and imaginative poetry is not dead among us in the "ignorant present"—it is alive, and of great splendour, filling the eyes and ears of those who by nature and study are fitted to receive such influences. If dazzling lines, passages, and scenes, were asked in proof of this, what an array might instantly be selected from the comparatively little known works of Mr. Browning—Mr. Darley—the author of the "Manuscripts of Erdely"—the author of "Festus," and several others still less known. While the struggle of this spirit to ascend visibly from the denser masses around—a struggle understood by so few, interesting to fewer, believed in by fewer still—while this is going on, there is also a struggle of a more practical kind in the field of letters, which is well patronized, greatly assisted, and expected to be successful—the spirit of reality, or of the artistical representation of reality. Such is apparently the creed, as it has hitherto been the practice, of Mr. Marston and many others. This is the principle which is thought to be the true representative of the tendency of the present age; so much easier to understand than the ideal; and so sure eventually of triumphant success. Believing in this, Madame Vestris carpeted and upholstered the stage, and Mr. Macready carried the ruinous error to a still greater extent in his "gettings up." But this principle is *not* the true representative of the age; it is not understood much better

than the ideal and imaginative, though all mechanical-minded men fully believe they can grasp it—so palpable it seems; and it will *not* be successful. Hitherto it has always failed. It cannot even obtain a temporary success—for all the spirit of railroads and all the steam. Their success is no precedent for art. Art is in a false position among them. The spirit of the Fine Arts cannot be identical with the material forces and improvements of the age, which are progressive—the former is not. Its greatness is self-centred, and revolves in its own proper orbit.

The career of the author of “Paracelsus,” extending at present over not much more than half the period of Mr. Tennyson, presents different features, some of which appear more fortunate and some less. His reception was comparatively good; we may say very good. Several of those periodicals, in which the critics seem disposed to regard poetry of a superior kind as a thing to be respected and studied, hailed the appearance of Mr. Robert Browning with all the honours which can reasonably be expected to be awarded to a new comer, who is moreover alive. In more than one quarter the young poet was fairly crowned. The less intelligent class of critics spoke of him with praise; guarding their expressions with an eye to retreat, if necessary, at any future time, made various extracts, and set him to grow. The rest did what is usual. Now, this reception was, all things considered, very good and promising; the poet had no enemies banded together to hunt and hoot him down, and he had admirers among the best class of critics. Here was a fine table-land whereon to build a reputation, and to make visible to all men those new fabrics of loveliness and intellectual glory which were manifestly germinating in his brain. Mr. Browning’s next production was a tragedy, which, “marvellous to relate,” he got acted immediately—an event quite unprecedented on the modern stage, except with those two or three dramatic authors who have previously passed through the customary delays preceding representation. It succeeded, as the saying is, but was not very attractive, and being printed “as acted,” did not advance the poet’s reputation. After this, Mr. Browning went to Italy, where he appears to have felt himself far too happy for the work that was before him; his spiritual existence drinking in draughts too deep and potent of

the divine air, and all the intense associations of the scenes in which he dwelt, and dreamed, and revelled, to suffer him to apply a steady strength, to master his own impulses, and to subdue the throng of elementary materials, so as to compress them into one definite design, suited to the general understandings of mankind.

After a silence of four years, the poet published "*Sordello*," which has proved, and will inevitably continue to prove, the richest puzzle to all lovers of poetry which was ever given to the world. Never was extraordinary wealth squandered in so extraordinary a manner by any prodigal son of Apollo. Its reception, if not already known to the reader, may be guessed without much difficulty; but the poem has certainly never been fairly estimated. The last publications of Mr. Browning are in a dramatic form and spirit; they were issued at intervals, and we trust will continue—the series bearing the title of "*Bells and Pomegranates*." The public has treated them hitherto, we believe, with less neglect than is usual with dramatic productions which have not been substantiated to the understanding by stage representation, although it is still to be feared that the title of the series has not induced any anticipative sympathy.

Mr. Marston's first work was the play of the "*Patrician's Daughter*," and was the subject of a second "*marvel*," for this, also, obtained speedy representation. To this play, as to Mr. Browning's "*Strafford*," Mr. Macready took a sudden fancy—fatal omen of invariable results! Both of these works are examples of men of genius going astray, the one turning tragedy into a spasmodic skeleton, the other carrying the appointments of what is technically and degradingly termed "*a coat-and-breeches comedy*" into the tragic arena, and wounding Art with real-life weapons. The play has had some temporary success; but it will only be temporary. Mr. Marston's next work was "*Gerald*," a poem in a dramatic form, illustrative of the old melancholy story of the struggles of Genius with the experiences of the actual world. The subject of Mr. Browning's first work was in some respects similar; but the struggles of "*Paracelsus*" are always treated poetically, while those of "*Gerald*" have a harsh matter-of-fact tone—for such is the principle of "*realizing*" in art.

"*Paracelsus*" is evidently the work of a young poet of premature powers—of one who sought to project his

imagination beyond the bounds of his future, as well as present, experience, and whose intellect had resolved to master all the results thus obtained. We say the powers were premature, simply because such a design could only be conceived by the most vigorous energies of a spirit just issuing forth with "blazing wings," too full of strength and too far of sight to believe in the ordinary laws and boundaries of mortality. It is the effort of a mind that wilfully forgets, and resolves to set aside its corporeal conditions. Even its possible failure is airily alluded to at the outset, and treated in the same way, not merely as no sort of reason for hesitating to make the attempt to gain "forbidden knowledge," but as a result which is solely referable to the Cause of its own aspirations and impulses.

"What though

It be so? If indeed the strong desire
Eclipse the aim in me? If splendour break
Upon the outset of my path alone,
And duskest shade succeed? What fairer seal
Shall I require to my authentic mission
Than this fierce energy? This instinct striving
Because its nature is to strive? Enticed
By the security of no broad course—
Where error is not, but success is sure.
How know I else such glorious fate my own,
But in the restless, irresistible force
That works within me? Is it for human will
To institute such impulses? Still less
To disregard their promptings? What should I
Do, kept among you all; your loves, your cares,
Your life—all to be mine? Be sure that God
Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart.
Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once
Into the vast and unexplored abyss!
What full grown power informs her from the first,
Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
The silent boundless regions of the sky!"

Paracelsus, p. 18, 19.

It should be observed that reference is made exclusively to the poet's creation, not to the "Paracelsus" of history. The higher destinies of man, which are conceived by the "Paracelsus" we are contemplating, as attainable on earth, are thus sublimely intimated:—

"The wide East, where old Wisdom sprung;
The bright South, where she dwelt; the populous North,
All are pass'd o'er—it lights on me. 'Tis time
New hopes should animate the world—new light
Should dawn from new revealings to a race
Weigh'd down so long, forgotten so long; so shall
The heaven reserv'd for us at last, receive
No creatures whom unwonted splendours blind,
But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze,

Whose beams not seldom lit their pilgrimage ;
Not seldom glorified their life below."

Paracelsus, p. 20.

A Promethean character pervades the poem throughout ; in the main design, as well as the varied aspirations and struggles to attain knowledge, and power, and happiness for mankind. But at the same time there is an intense craving after the forbidden secrets of creation, and eternity, and power, which place "Paracelsus" in the same class as "Faust," and in close affinity with all those works, the object of which is an attempt to penetrate the mysteries of existence—the infinity within us and without us. Need it be said, that the result is in all the same?—and the baffled magic—the sublime occult—the impassioned poetry—all display the same ashes which were once wings. The form, the mode, the impetus and course of thought and emotion, admit, however, of certain varieties, and "Paracelsus" is an original work. Its aim is of the highest kind ; in full accord and harmony with the spirit of the age ; and we admit that it has been accomplished, in so far as such a design can well be : for since the object of all such abstractions as Paracelsus must necessarily fail, individually and practically, the true end obtained is that of refining and elevating others, by the contemplation of such efforts, and giving a sort of polarity to the vague impulses of mankind towards the lofty and the beneficent. It also endeavours to sound the depths of existence for hidden treasures of being.

Living a long life—dreaming a lofty dream—working and suffering, Paracelsus now lies dead before us ! Behold an epitome of the course he ran ! Paracelsus aspires. He has a glorious vision of the discovery of hidden knowledge never as yet revealed to man. He believes that if he constantly seeks it, and works for it, he shall attain it ; and that, were it not possible, these "vast longings" would not be "sent to direct us." He "stands at first, where all aspire at last," and pursues the ever-fleeting "secret of the world," of man and our ultimate destiny. He searches at home and abroad ; but, chief of all, he searches within himself, believing that there is "an inmost centre in us all, where truth abides in fulness ;" and that to *know*,

"Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may dart forth,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without."

Filled with the divine portion of truth, which he mistakes for the whole, Paracelsus pursues his labours, "serene amidst the echoes, beams, and glooms," yet struggling onward with impassioned will, and subduing his life "to the one purpose whereto he has ordained it," till at length he "attains"—But what?—Imperfect knowledge! He finds that knowledge without love is intellect without heart, and a bitter, as it must ever be a certain, disappointment. Paracelsus looks around him, and renews his labours.

"This life of mine
Must be lived out, and a grave thoroughly earned."

He becomes a miraculous physician—professor of medicine at Basil; and his cures, his doctrines, and his fame are noised abroad in the world. But he is not satisfied: he feels the poverty of such reputation, when compared with what he would do for the human race. Again Paracelsus aspires. What his object now is in this part of the poem is not so clear; but knowledge, and love, and disappointed efforts, and fresh struggles and apprehensions, are all at work, while Paracelsus is at the same time full of anguish at the persecution which now hunts him from place to place, as an impostor and a quack. His feelings often display strong signs of over-tasked powers, and impel his mind along the borders of delirium and madness. He looks back upon the past, where "the heaving sea is black behind;" and in the miseries and horrors of the present, he feels at times that "there is a hand groping amid the darkness to catch us."

The closing scene is near. Paracelsus finally "attains." And what?—Purified feelings, and a clear knowledge of what may, and may *not* be. He is on the brink of the grave, and of eternity; a sublime fire is before his path, a constant music is in his ears, and a melting into "bliss for evermore." True to his ruling passion, he pauses a moment to speculate on his momentous state—the awful threshold on which he stands—for a last chance of discovering "some further cause for this peculiar mood;" but it "has somehow slipt away" from him. He stands in "his naked spirit so majestic," and full, once more, of ennobling hopes, looks forward to the time when man shall commence the infancy of a higher state of being. Then, with one last sigh over the "waste and wear" of faculties "displayed

in vain, but born to prosper in some better sphere," the old heart-broken philosopher closes his eyes in death. His awe-stricken friend, standing mute for hours over the pale clay, at length slowly murmurs—

"And this was Paracelsus!"

The genius of Mr. Marston has hitherto displayed a misgiving originality—or a fancied originality—self-confident at its first launch upon the tide, and midway calling for help from the past, and supporting its sinking venture by all manner of old associations. He took the bull by the horns, and let him go again; the consequence has been that he has only aggravated and exalted the power he intended to tame or transfer. He intended to show that the bull was a real thing, and the provocation transforms it to a Jupiter. The principle on which the "Patrician's Daughter" was written, (a kind of following in the track of the "Lady of Lyons,") was to prove that reality and the present time constituted the best material and medium for modern poetry, especially dramatic poetry. Now this very play contains as many antiquated words and phrases as any modern drama written in direct imitation of the Elizabethan dramatists. As an acting tragedy it has failed to take any satisfactory hold upon the stage—for ladies with fashionable parasols, and gentlemen in grenadiers' caps, are an outrage to tragic art, which appeals to the hearts and businesses of men through universal sympathies; and inasmuch as it cannot be aided by matter-of-fact costumes, so it may be injured by ugliness in that respect, more particularly when it constantly calls back (instead of stimulating) the imagination, and reminds it that all this pretended reality is *not* real. An extract from De Quincy's "Essay on Imitation in the Fine Arts," will make this question more clear:

"The first error of the artist,—consists in stepping beyond his art to seek in the resources of another, an increase of *imitative resemblance*. The second error of the artist,—consists in seeking truth (short of the limits of every art) by a system of servile copy, which deprives the imitation or the image of *that fictitious part which constitutes at once its essence and its character*.

"In every art there must be with respect to truth some *fiction*, and with respect to resemblance something incomplete."

In the delineation of his chief character, moreover, Mr. Marston commits the very dangerous error of saying prodigious things of his hero's abilities, but not showing his greatness by his actions. Among other

extravagances he calls him "the apostle of his age," and shows no shadow of justification for the title.

We have here to mention, chiefly for the sake of reprehension, the numerous reality tragedies of the author of "The Shepherd's Well." Some are printed with his name, some not; but they are all of one family. This gentleman has attempted to introduce real-life, common-place colloquial dialogue into tragedy,—not as prose tragedy, but in the form of verse. Whatever ability he may display in the conception of subjects, we certainly think that his method of execution defeats the design. The perfectly domestic drama should be presented in a perfectly domestic form. Rapidity of production is also apt to degenerate into reckless impulse. A tragedy at three sittings appears to be Mr. Powell's rate of work. Five mortal acts as a few hours' amusement! But they are *not* acts. They are interludes to display a catastrophe. These productions have the merit of one idea; and sometimes a very fine and striking one it would prove, if properly worked out; but having reserved this idea for the last scene of his last act, the author seems to think that any mass of introductory or irrelevant matter, may be cut into four parts—and *then* comes Act the Fifth, and the one stinging idea. That he has "stuff" in him of a good kind, if fairly worked upon, and with any justice done to its own nature, is evident, though it may be doubted from these specimens whether he will ever be a dramatist. But, in the first place, and in any case, we object to the principle of *realizing* in dramatic composition, however admirably the intention were executed. "The Blind Wife," the "Wife's Revenge;" "Marguerite;" "Marion," &c., &c., are all instances of the error, carried to its extreme, and with a fairness that brings the question at once to an issue. It ought to be added that the "Shepherd's Well" is the best of Mr. Powell's productions, and not only has fine elements of feeling and purpose in its conception, but is executed in a style of more care and poetical refinement than any of the rest of his large "young family." It is a great pity that six months' labour was not bestowed upon so finely conceived a subject.

That a composition intended for the stage, which was the second production of Mr. Browning, should be very different from an epic or psychological poem, will excite no surprise; but that it should contain so few inci-

dental touches of that peculiar genius which he had previously displayed, is a curious circumstance to remark. Paracelsus was an ebullition of the poet's powers. The tragedy of "Strafford" is a remarkable instance of the suppression of them. It was a strange mistake, with regard to the tragic principle, which needs the highest consummation of poetry and passion, so that each shall be either or both; whereas "Strafford" was a piece of passionate action with the bones of poetry. It was a maimed thing, all over patches and dashes, with the light showing through its ribs, and the wind whistling through its arms and legs; while in its head and echoing in its heart, was sung its passion for a king. It was printed as "acted." What it might have been originally is impossible to say, but we have some difficulty in conceiving how it could have been put together with so many disjointed pieces in the first instance. The number of dashes and gaps of omission made its pages often resemble a Canadian field in winter, after a considerable thoroughfare of snow-shoes. It appeared, however, to please Mr. Macready, and it was played by him appropriately during several nights.

But it is ever the "trick of genius" to do something which we do not expect; and turning to the series, issued under the pretty and most unsatisfactory title of "Bells and Pomegranates," we discover Mr. Browning to possess the finest dramatic genius. "King Victor and King Charles" is a complete tragedy. It appears in the form of two main divisions, each of which is also divided into two parts, yet presenting one entire and perfectly united drama. It is properly a tragedy in four acts, with the interval of about a twelvemonth between the second and third. The characters are drawn with a fine and masterly hand, and the scenes in which they appear are full of nice shades and gradations, and subtle casuistries of the passions, and are not only dramatic in an intellectual sense, but would be so to the feeling and to the eye, if duly represented. It is another proof, among the many already existing, that the unacted drama is incomparably superior to the melodramatic plays and farces adopted by managers.]

The action in "King Victor and King Charles" is so finely intervolved, though so very clear to the understanding, and its scenes are so thoroughly dependent

upon each other, even for ordinary effect, that extracts can do no justice to its artistic structure.

The same author's tragedy of the "Return of the Druses" is, in conception, still finer. The main requisites for a successful acting tragedy are character and passionate action—and these the "Druses" possesses in the highest degree; the next requisite is the perspicuous distribution of the action—and here this tragedy is deficient, but in a way that might easily be remedied, and with far less trouble than is always taken with the works of Mr. Knowles, or Sir E. L. Bulwer, or with any of the "great discoveries" and failures of Mr. Macready. The character of Djabal is a masterpiece, and of the highest order of dramatic portraiture. It is at once complicated and clear; the motives interwoven and conflicting, yet "palpable to feeling as to sight;" and all his actions, their results, and his own end, are perfectly in harmony with these premises. Anything in him that puzzles us, is only in the progress of the drama; for eventually he stands out in the finest relief, as though upon "the mountain," to which his dying steps lead on his emancipated people.

Of a similar kind in design and structure to "The Patrician's Daughter," is the poem of "Gerald," by the same author. It is another form of the idea of a man of genius struggling with the world of the present time. The scenes are laid in such places as Hyde Park, the High Road, at Bayswater, &c., and the language having a strong smack of the olden time. The poem may be designated as a narrative dialogue and reverie, in which a series of emotions and thoughts, and a few events, are brought before us. They are all very like private experiences poetized, philosophized, and moralized upon. It may also be doubted whether the author's faculties have attained their maturity, judging by the love he has for displaying his good things in Italics, evidently showing that he considers the ideas as very new, which they frequently are not, though perhaps expressed in a novel form. But the gravest fault is of the same kind as that in his previous work, *viz.*, the author gives us no proof that his hero is a man of genius. Gerald says:

" In my solitude,
While bending o'er the page of bards, to feel
Their greatness fill my soul, and albeit then
The lofty meaning I could scarce translate,
To quiver with an awful, vague delight,

And find my heart respond, although no sense
 Outran my thought ! "What, shall no harvest burst
 From seed like this ?"—*Gerald*, p. 11.

We answer, "very likely not any." If any, then most likely a reproduction of the thoughts of others, the seeds of which have inspired him. All that he says in proof of an impulse and capacity, is in itself only poetical emotion, which should not be mistaken (as it always is in youth) for poetical genius. Gerald leaves his home feeling a strong impulse to do *something* great in the world. Here at once we see the old sad error—a vague aspiration or ambition mistaken for an object and a power. A man of genius rushes out of his solitude, or takes some extreme step, because he is possessed with a ruling passion—a predominating idea—a conviction that he can accomplish a particular thing, and so relieve his breast of the ever-smouldering image—his imagination of the ever-haunting thought. He does not rush forth with expanded arms to grasp at whatever presents itself to his inflamed desires, but to grasp his soul's idol. In like manner—to come down to details—a man of genius never snatches a pen, and sits down to write whatever comes uppermost (or if he do so, now and then, it is because he is in a morbid state, and will most likely burn what he has written); but to write down a sudden revelation of a definite kind. We think that towards the close of his work Mr. Marston discovered this; in fact, we see signs that he did; but it was too late, and all he could do was to make his hero accuse himself of a selfish ambition as an excuse for his want of success.

So much for these heroes; but that the author of both these works is a man of genius, and one of the moving spirits of the time, no doubt can exist. Mr. Marston's writings are full of thoughtful beauty, of religious aspiration, and affectionate tenderness. He has also acquired considerable reputation as a lecturer, and is in other respects likely to have a prosperous career before him—a career which at present he has not commenced in that fullness of strength which we anticipate he will shortly develope.

Having spoken of the realizing attempts of Mr. Powell with regard to the drama, it will be only justice merely to remark, that this is not the case with his other poetical productions. He possesses much talent in lyrical composition, and his poems of the affections

have great beauty. Many of the other pieces are of a very restless and unequal description. They breathe too much of death, and a morbid harping upon religious forms and dogmas. If we were to select those which we like best, they would be from among his smaller poems of a few stanzas each; and we could pick out many sonnets, which are excellent in thought, imagery, and harmonious versification. His longer poems want design and order—to say nothing of some care and consistency. For instance, in his poem entitled “A Dream of Arcadi,” he thinks proper to see a splendid cathedral, to hear a fine organ and anthems, and to delight his senses with the fumes of incense, amidst crowds of devotees. High-mass in Arcadia! For the rest, however, every one must feel the presence of the spirit of poetry, and of religious sensibility; nor can any confusion of time, place, form, and of purpose (or the want of purpose), prevent that sympathy which follows even the wildest touch upon the chords of universal emotion.

To that somewhat extensive class of readers who are of opinion that poetry, so far from being a thing to study, should be so plain, that “all who run may read,” and who take up the works of Mr. Browning with that view, we should premise that they might just as well run another way. In “Paracelsus” the difficulties were in the quantity and quality of thought; in “Sordello” there is the additional difficulty of an impracticable style. In proportion to the depth or novelty of a thought, the poet has chosen to render the vehicle difficult in which it is conveyed—sometimes by its erudite elaboration of parenthesis within parenthesis, and question upon query—sometimes by its levity, jaunting indifference, and apparent contempt of everything—sometimes it has an interminable period, or one the right end of which you cannot find; a knotted serpent, which either has no discoverable tail, or has several, the ends of which are in the mouths of other serpents, or else flanking in the air—sometimes it has a series of the shortest possible periods, viz., of one word, or of two or three words. And amidst all this there is at frequent intervals a dark hailstone shower of proper names—names of men and women, and places, and idealities, with which only one general reader in about twenty thousand can be expected to be familiar, and with the whole of which the style of the poet seems courteously to assume that all

his readers are upon the most familiar terms possible. Under these circumstances it can be no wonder that such of the miscellaneous public as take up a poem by way of a little *relaxation* shrunk back in hopeless dismay; nor that the more numerous class of daily and weekly critics, whose judgments are, from the very nature of their position, compelled in most cases to be as hasty as their hands, which "write against time," should have been glad to dismiss "*Sordello*" with an angry paragraph. In a few instances the critics appeared to have read a portion of it; in the great majority of instances it was not read at all, which fact was evident in the notice, and in several instances was boldly declared by the irate critic as a task beyond his sublunary powers. And this no doubt was true.

"Who will, may hear *Sordello's* story told:
His story?"

The author is bewitched at the very outset with an inability to "get on with his story;" and he never recovers this bad beginning. The historical ground-plan of the work is laid down after a most bewildering fashion:

"So Guelfs rebuilt
Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt
When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet
Buccio Virtù; God's wafer, and the street
Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm
With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm.
This could not last. Off Salinguerra went
To Padua, Podestà," &c.—*Sordello*, p. 7.

Adding to the vague or conflicting historical accounts whatever fictions were agreeable to his fancy, the poet has thus successfully succeeded in bewildering himself and his readers, amidst the elaborate webs of all manner of real and ideal events and biographies. Whether to the purpose of his psychologically digressive narrative, or merely as an association suggested (to himself) by the last remark he has made, he never lets you off. Speaking of Adelaide, and the Kaiser's gold, and Monk Hilary, who is on his knees—

"Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please
Exact a punishment for many things
You know *and some you never knew*; which brings
To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix
And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's
And Ecelin's betrothed; the Count himself
Must get my Palma: Ghibellin and Guelf
Mean to embrace each other. So began
Romano's missive to his fighting-man

Taurello on the Tuscan's death, away
 With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay
 Next month for Syria."—*Sordello*, p. 81.

Intending to say several things in token of admiration, amidst all the off-hand severities of contemporaries that have been vented upon "*Sordello*," it nevertheless seemed right to display some of the heaviest faults of the poem at the outset. Having done this unsparingly, the far more pleasant, even though the far more arduous task remains. The following are offered as opinions and impressions of the work, regarding it as a whole:—

The poem of "*Sordello*" is an attempt to carry out the impossible design in which the author's previous hero, "*Paracelsus*," had so admirably failed. It is as though the poet, having created a giant, whose inevitable fall in the attempt to scale the heavens had been so fully explained, was resolved himself to follow in the same track with all the experience and power thus derived; and, moreover, with the consciousness of being the real and vital essence which had called that idealism into existence, and less likely, therefore, to "go off" into fine air, not being amenable to the same laws. *Sordello* takes up the asbestos lamp from the inmost chamber of the tomb of *Paracelsus*, and issues forth with it into the world, being already far on the way towards the outlet which leads to other worlds, or states of being, and perhaps to the borders of infinity. *Paracelsus*, while dying, came to the conviction that men were already beginning "to pass their nature's bounds;" that a fine instinct guided them beyond the power of mere knowledge or experience, and that they were—

—— "all ambitious, upwards tending,
 Like plants in mines, which never saw the sun,
 But dream of him and guess where he may be,
 And do their best to climb and get to him."

He had, moreover, a sentient perception, "beyond the comprehension of our narrow thought, but somehow felt and known in every shift and change of the spirit within—of what God is, of what we are, and what life is." Now, we should reply to *Paracelsus*, and to all who, like him, have suffered their imaginative sensibilities to reason them into such notions, that they *deceive themselves*, although the truth is *in* them. Full, however, of this sublime deception, *Sordello* tunes his harp, and works through all the complicated chords and

mazes of harmony with indefatigable zeal, from the first note to the end. In the last book of "*Sordello*" we find him almost using the same expressions as in the last book of "*Paracelsus*." Here we learn that his truth—

"Lighted his old life's every shift and change,
Effort with counter-effort; nor the range
Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked
Some other—which of these could he suspect
Prying into them by the sudden blaze?
The real way seemed made up of all the ways—
Mood after mood of the one mind in him;
Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,
Of a transcendent all-embracing sense
Demanding only outward influence,
A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,
Power to uplift his power," &c.—*Sordello*, p. 217, 218.

Exactly so: he only wants that very thing which has been denied to mortality since the beginning of things. Despairing of this, and doubting whether any external power in nature be adequate to forward his desire, *Sordello* finally moots the question of whether he may be ordained a prouder fate—"a law to his own sphere?" *Sordello* dies, and the whole amount of his transcendental discoveries may be summed up in the poet's question—

"What has *Sordello* found?"

To which no reply is given.

Such is the most simplified account the present student can offer of the main object of the poem of "*Sordello*," carved out from the confused "story," and broken, mazy, dancing sort of narrative no-outline, which has occasioned so much trouble, if not despair, to his most patient and pains-taking admirers. Some have thought that the general purport of the poem was to show that mere material things and matters of fact were a mistaken object of life, only leading to disappointment and sorrow; and that in the ideal world alone, true contentment, satisfaction, and happiness were to be found; others have contended, on the contrary, that it is intended to display the impossibility of attaining to a knowledge of the essences of things, that a life passed amidst idealisms is one of inutility and sorrow, and that the true object of man should be to discover and attain the best realities. But a third view suggests itself. It is probable that *Sordello* is not devoted to either of the above purposes exclusively, but

comprising both, displays the hopes and the despairs, the value and the inutility of both, when followed with the devotion of the whole being. The selection is left to the reader's individual nature, in such proportions as may accord with that nature.

As to the poetry of "Sordello," apart from all these disquisitions, we think it abounds with beauties. We should offer as one instance (it cannot be extracted on account of its length) the matchless description of the poetical mind of the noblest order, as typified in *Sordello*, from the bottom of page 20 to the top of page 25. Of the childhood of *Sordello*, a beautiful description is given,—at p. 26–28.

The complex working of the youthful mind of the poet is illustrated in a very happy manner :

" Thus thrall reached thrall ;
He o'er-festooning every interval
As the adventurous spider, making light
Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,
From barbican to battlement ; so flung
Fantasies forth and in their centre swung
Our architect."

Sordello, p. 29.

At page 69, there are several passages highly illustrative of some of our previous remarks on the philosophy of " *Sordello* ;" but the simple matter-of-fact beauty of the following must be apparent to the reader :

" In Mantua-territory half is slough,
Half pine-tree forest ; maples, scarlet-oaks
Breed o'er the river beds ; even Mincio chokes
With sand the summer through ; but 'tis morass
In winter up to Mantua walls."

Sordello, p. 17.

The whole of page 39 might be quoted for its pastoral loveliness.

Containing, as it does, so many passages of the finest poetry, no manner of doubt can exist but that " *Sordello* " has been hitherto treated with great injustice. It has been condemned in terms that would lead any one to suppose there was nothing intelligible throughout the whole poem. We have shown its defects in detail, and we have also shown that it has some of the highest beauties. The style, the manner, the broken measure, the recondite form ; these have constituted still greater difficulties than even the recondite matter of which it treats—though the latter only were quite enough to " settle " or " unsettle " an ordinary reader.

But how speak of the poem synthetically—how review it as a whole? In what terms shall we endeavour to express the sum of our impressions of thousands of verses poured forth, as Sordello says, “by a mad impulse nothing justified, short of Apollo’s presence?” In sobriety of language it is not to be done, save most unfittingly. In what fine rapture, then, shall we seek to lose our mere critical faculties, and resign ourselves to the swift and wayward current of the verse; now basking in its brilliancy, now merged in its profound shadows, at one time whirled in a vortex, and the next moment cast upon some vast shelving strand, glistening all over with flints, and diamonds, and broken shells, where strange amphibious creatures crawl, and stare, or *wink*, while the song of Sordello passes over our prostrate head, and we have to scramble up and stagger after the immortal quire, vainly catching at the torn and cast-off segments of their flickering skirts? We hurry on in fond yet vain pursuit, when suddenly a Guelf and Ghibellin appear before us, each with an enormous urn of antique mould, which they invert above our tingling cranium, and instantly we are half extinguished and quite overwhelmed by a dark shower of notes and memoranda from Tiraboschi, Nostradamus, the Latin treatise of Dante, the Chronicle of Rolandin, the Comments on the sixth Canto of the Purgatorio, by Benvenuto d’Imola, and all the most recondite hints from the most learned and minute biographical lexicographers of the old Italian periods.

The poem of “Sordello” is a beautiful globe, which, rolling on its way to its fit place among the sister spheres, met with some accident which gave it such a jar that a multitude of things half slipt into each other’s places. It is a modern hieroglyphic, and should be carved on stone for the use of schools and colleges. Professors of poetry should decypher and comment upon a few lines every morning before breakfast, and young students should be *ground* upon it. It is a fine mental exercise, whatever may be said or thought to the contrary. Here and there may be found passages equal to the finest things that were ever written, and are not more difficult to the understanding than those same finest things. It is also full of passages apparently constructed with a view to make the general reader rage and foam, if ever a general reader should push forth his

adventurous boat out of sight of the shore of the first page—and out of sight it will surely appear to him before he has doubled the storm-rejoicing cape of page four. To some it will appear to be a work addressed to the perception of a seventh sense, or of a class of faculties which we do not at present know that we possess—if we really do possess. To others it will seem to be a work written in the moon by the only sane individual of that sphere, *viz.*, the man of that ilk; or a work written by a poet somewhere in the earth by the light of a remote sun whose rays are unrevealed to other eyes. To some the most vexatious part of it will be the countless multitude of little abrupt snatches of questions, snaps of answers, and inscrutable exclamations, chirping around from every branch of a wilderness or a jungle of glimmering mysteries. To others the continual consciousness of the reader's presence will most annoy, because it destroys the ideal life, and reminds him of something far less agreeable—himself, and his distracting problem! The flowing familiar style sometimes reminds us of Shelley's "Julian and Maddalo" with a touch of Keats' "Endymion," broken up into numerous pit-falls, whether mines of thought or quirks of fancy; but there are also other occasions when it becomes spiral, and of sustained inspiration, not unlike certain parts of the "Prometheus Unbound" put into rhyme; yet is it no imitation of any other poet. Certain portions also remind us of the suggestive, voluble, disconnected, philosophical jargon of Shakspeare's fools, and with all the meaning which they often have for those who can find it. The poem is thick-sown throughout with suggestions and glances of history and biography, of dark plots, tapestried chambers, eyes behind the arras, clapping doors, dreadful galleries, and deeds in the dark, over which there suddenly bursts a light from on high, and looking up you find a starry shower, as from some remote rocket, descending in silent brilliancy upon the dazzled page. Each book is full of gems set in puzzles. It is like what the most romantic admirers of Goëthe insist upon "making out" that he intended in his simplest fables. It is the poetical portion of three epics, shaken together in a sack and emptied over the hand of the intoxicated reader. It is a perfect storehouse of Italian scenery and exotic fruits, plants, and flowers; so much so, that by the force of contrast it

brings to mind the half-dozen flowers and pastoral common-places in collections of "Beauties of English Poets," till the recollection of the sing-song repetitions makes one almost shout with laughter. It is pure Italian in all its materials. There is not one drop of British ink in the whole composition. Nay, there is no ink in it, for it is all written in Tuscan grape juice, embrowned by the sun. It abounds in things addressed to a second sight, and we are often required to *see double* in order to apprehend its meaning. The poet may be considered the Columbus of an impossible discovery. It is a promised land, spotted all over with disappointments, and yet most truly a land of promise, if ever so rich and rare a chaos can be developed into form and order by revision, and its southern fulness of tumultuous heart and scattered vineyards be ever reduced to given proportion, and wrought into a shape that will fit the average mental vision and harmonize with the more equable pulsations of mankind.

SIR EDWARD LYTTON BULWER.

——“Pitch thy project high !
Sink not in spirit. Who aimeth at the sky
Shoots higher much than if he meant a tree.
Let thy mind still be bent, still plotting where,
And when, and how, the business may be done.”

GEORGE HERBERT.

B——“whom all the Graces taught to please,
Mixed mirth with morals, eloquence with ease,
His genius social, as his judgment clear ;
When frolic, prudent ; smiling when severe.
Secure each temper and each taste to hit,
His was the curious happiness of wit.”—MALLET.

It should be remembered to the honour of Sir E. L. Bulwer, that although born to an independence and to the prospect of a fortune, and inheriting by accident of birth an advantageous position in society, he has yet cultivated his talent with the most unremitting assiduity, equal to that of any “poore scholar,” and has not suffered his “natural gifts” to be smothered by indolence or the pleasures of the world. He is one of the most prolific authors of our time ; and his various accomplishments, habits of research, and extraordinary industry, no less than his genius, well entitle him to the rank he holds as one of the most successful, in that branch of literature in which he eminently excels. We must not be dazzled by his versatility ; we entertain no doubts about his real excellence, and shall endeavour to fix his true and definite position.

Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer is the youngest son of General Bulwer, of Heydon Hall, in the county of Norfolk, and of Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Henry Warburton Lytton, Esq., of Knebworth Park, Herts, to the possession of which estate he has just succeeded ; and is connected on both sides of the house, with many noble and ancient families. He sat in parliament at an early age for the borough of St. Ives, and subsequently for the city of Lincoln. His parliamentary career was highly creditable, and in one respect, in especial, has left an honourable testimonial to his exertions ; we allude to the bill for the protection of dramatic copyright,

which he brought in and carried. He distinguished himself at the same time as an able political writer. As a speaker, he had won the respect of the House, though his voice is weak, his manner somewhat hesitating, and his style more florid than accords with the taste of that assembly. His train of argument surmounted these disadvantages, and, what was more difficult still, induced honourable members to overlook a certain appearance of fastidious nicety in dress, which by no means accords with their notions in general. He was made a baronet; the date and occasion of which event we forget. His political labours interfered not in the least with his literary career, to the progress of which we now turn.

The development of his literary taste is ascribed to the influence of his mother, to whose charge he was early consigned by his father's death. The "*Percy's Reliques*" was a favourite book of his childhood, and he wrote some ballads in imitation, when only five or six years old. He was never sent to any public school, but graduated at Cambridge. He, however, found for himself a kind of education,—which was probably of more importance to the development of genius than any he received in the University,—by wandering over the greater part of England and Scotland on foot during the long vacation, and afterwards making a similar tour of France on horseback. He began to publish when only two or three and twenty, at first in verse; next anonymously a novel now forgotten, entitled "*Falkland*." It hence appears that his early attempts were failures. His first successful work was "*Pelham*," and this established his reputation as a clever novelist. It was rapidly followed by "*The Disowned*," by "*Devereux*;" and then by "*Paul Clifford*," which stamped him as a man of genius. "*Eugene Aram*" well sustained the high reputation thus gained.

There was a considerable interval between these two fine works last named, and the other novels and romances of their author, in which he undertook the editorship of the "*New Monthly Magazine*." His own papers, of which he wrote many, were various in subject; sometimes political, sometimes literary criticism. A series entitled "*The Conversations of an Ambitious Student*" was in general devoted to abstract speculation. The best of these were afterwards re-published under the title of "*The Student*." The germ of many of the

thoughts embodied and developed in these papers belongs to Hazlitt; but the germ has power and life sufficient to bear the branching stems and foliage with which it was elaborated by Bulwer, and in a manner that was often worthy of it. If the saying attributed to Sir Lytton Bulwer concerning his editorship is true, it belongs to that "dandiacal" portion of him, which disagreeably interferes with one's confidence in his sincerity; for if he said he became an Editor "to show that a gentleman might occupy such a position," it must simply be set down to the same Beau-Brummel idiosyncrasy which makes him seriously careful of the cut of his coat, and the fashion of his waistcoat. But it was only a "flourish of the *queue*," whoever said it. The motive was more worthy; and if a proof were wanting, the papers of the "Student" might be referred to, in which the aim is always high and pure. "England and the English," was more the work of the man of the world, and the member of Parliament, superadded to the thinker. No doubt it contains some exaggerations, but it is correct in the main, and is an admirably applied and much required dose for our overweening conceit of our national prejudices and pride. It might have been entitled "An Exposition of the Influences of Aristocracy."

A return to the region of fiction was perhaps accelerated by a tour on the Continent. Passing over the "Pilgrims of the Rhine," a piece of prettiness in literature beautifully illustrated,—a work which, to use appropriate language, a perfect gentleman might permit himself to write for a thousand pounds—we see Sir Lytton Bulwer in his own element again upon the publication of his "Last Days of Pompeii;" followed by "Rienzi," and, at intervals wonderfully short, by "Ernest Maltravers," "Alice," "Night and Morning," "Zanoni," and "The Last of the Barons."

Had the author of these works—giving evidence of a range and variety of intellect, invention, and genius sufficient to satisfy a high ambition—attempted no other walk of genius, he would have stood above and beyond the analytical portion of criticism, and commanded its far more worthy and genial office of synthetical appreciation of excellence. But he has aimed at the fame of a poet, and a dramatist, besides. Those who are used to think of Sir Lytton Bulwer as a uniformly successful author; a sort of magician under whose wand paper

will always turn into gold, do not know that several already forgotten poems have been put forth by him since his acquirement of popularity, the very names of which sound strange. "Ismael, an Oriental Tale," "Leila, or the Siege of Granada," "The Siamese Twins" have gone into forgetfulness, and "Eva and other poems and tales," are not destined to a long life. Then there have been patriotic songs, and odes, in which there was a curious mixture of the roast-beef of Old England style, with an attempt at imaginative impulse and intensity of meaning, depending chiefly for high personifications and abstract qualities upon the use of capital letters. Moreover, there was a tragedy of "Cromwell" which is said to have been re-written, and its design and character totally changed while it was going through the press: and finally, after it was printed, it was suppressed. "The public was not worthy of it,"—we heard this intimated. But there were some few intellects alive who were; and they could not obtain it. Besides, the public has many good things of which it is not worthy, as a mass; and yet, here and there, the right sort of man always picks up the right sort of book to his thinking.

That there are great elements of popular success, and a mastery of the worldly side of it, in Sir Lytton Bulwer, is undoubted; nor would it in the least surprise us if he became a peer of the realm, sometime within the next ten years; nevertheless there are several other things which he cannot accomplish.

The known dramatic works of Sir Lytton Bulwer consist of "The Duchess de la Vallière," "The Lady of Lyons," "Richelieu," "The Sea Captain," and "Money," all brought out on the stage by Mr. Macready. The first was deservedly a failure. Of the others, one only retains a share of popularity, but its share is a large one. "The Lady of Lyons" is a decided favourite with the public. It is usual to place its author among the first of modern dramatists, which he decidedly is *not*, as well as among the first of our novelists, which he assuredly *is*, of whatever period.

The charm of the "Lady of Lyons" results from the interest of the plot, the clear and often pathetic working of the story, the easy flow of the dialogue, the worldly morality, and the reality of the action, just sufficiently clothed in an atmosphere of poetry to take it out of the mere prose of existence, without calling upon the ima-

gination for any effort to comprehend it. All this, united with every advantage that scenic effect and excellent acting could give, established the "Lady of Lyons" in a popularity which it has always retained. But this alone is not the mede of a great dramatist. The plot of the play in question will not bear examination by any high standard. A heart is treacherously won; then, when after the cruel conflict with its own just indignation, it is ready to forgive all and continue true to its love, it is deserted with cruelty as great as the former treachery, all because a self-loving notion of "honour" demands the sacrifice. The old false preference of the shadow for the substance! Then, at last, when honour is satisfied all is right. It is made right by the lover having been to battle, and "fought away" and obtained rank and property. In the last scene he literally purchases the lady—the price passing before her very face. This is fostering our worst faults; exciting sympathy for the errors that are among the most prolific sources of "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" of our life.

"Money" had a better purpose, was more clever and witty, and was superior in its structure; but while the power of money, and all its undue influence in the world, was excellently displayed, the ostensible and popular moral tendency of the play was to encourage the acquisition as a legitimate and honourable means for attaining objects of all kinds,—a triumph of the purse over every thought and feeling. The author shows his contempt for this condition of the world; but only meets it upon its own ground, instead of taking a higher. It was very successful at first, but is now seldom acted. "Richelieu" had also a "run" on its first appearance; but has never since been represented.

The character of Sir Lytton Bulwer's mind is analytical, rather than impulsive; elaborate and circuitous, rather than concentrating and direct; fanciful rather than imaginative; refining and finishing, rather than simple and powerful; animated and vivid, rather than passionate and fiery. He constructs upon system, rather than upon sensation; and works by his model, and with little help from instinct. His strongest faith is in the head, not in the heart; and for these reasons he is not a great dramatist. Nor can all the labour and skill in the world make him one. But he is philosophical and artis-

tical, and is pretty sure to display both intellect and skill in whatever he undertakes.

Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer is a great novelist; his name will rank among the masters in the art, and his works will live together with theirs. It is sufficient to mention the names of such compositions as "Paul Clifford," "Eugene Aram," "Night and Morning," "Ernest Maltravers"—with its sequel of "Alice"—and "Zanoni," to feel fearless in making this assertion. The variety and originality displayed in these fine works; the invention; the practical knowledge, and clever working of character; the fine art in the management of the plot; the elegance of the style; the power over the feelings in deep pathos; all these qualities combine to place their author in the highest rank of this department of literature.

In calling to mind the list of Bulwer's novels, those we have mentioned occurred first as masterpieces, but others remain behind to which other tastes may give the preference. "Pelham" has never been a favourite with us, notwithstanding its decided superiority to its contemporary "fashionable novels." We cannot relish philosophy or abstract speculation (and we grant these in "Pelham") from the same mouth which discusses the fopperies of the toilette, and how to make a pair of trousers! "A fine gentleman" is not to our taste, and there is quite enough worldly morality in the actual world without putting it down in a book, as a good thing worth repeating. "The last Days of Pompeii," wove into a story of deep interest and beauty, the memories of the classic times; and the character of Nydia, the blind girl, will last as long as our language endures. "Rienzi" is, perhaps, the least marked by genius of any of its author's later works of fiction.

Among those first enumerated, "Eugene Aram" is distinguished for the development of a great and subtle truth. In the dreadful crime into which the benevolent and gifted scholar is betrayed at the very moment when he is full of ardour for knowledge and virtue, small cavillers are apt to ask, could a benevolent or virtuous nature act thus?—how can it be natural? We consider that the revelations of genius here displayed may fairly be said to have recorded a consciousness that in the moral as well as the physical frame, "we are fearfully and wonderfully made;" that when the instincts and

the passions are over-mastered by the intellect, and man rests proudly on his boasted reason alone, he may work strange deeds before "high Heaven;" that he must beware of the casuistries of his brain no less than the wild workings of his heart, and that the affections and passions are the grand purifiers, the master movers, the voice of God in the soul, regulating the speculative, daring reason, and controlling as well as impelling action. This is to write greatly; to write philosophy and history, the physiology of sensation, and aggregate and individual truth.

In "Ernest Maltravers" is portrayed the training of genius to the business of life; a hard task, and accomplished in a truly philosophical spirit. But as examples of excellence in his art, as well as of variety in its manifestation, we would especially dwell on "Paul Clifford," "Night and Morning," and "Zanoni."

"Paul Clifford" is of the same class as the "Beggars' Opera," and worthy to rank with it. While its hero is a highwayman, and the lowest characters are introduced in it, who have an appropriate dialect, there is nothing in it that could for a moment shock any one of real delicacy, and there is a tinge of the ideal wrought into the very texture of most of these men which renders them interesting to the imagination, as their good feeling and *bonhomie*, with the total absence of anything brutal or gross, reconciles them to the mind, and obtains a hold upon the sympathies. But besides being individualized, as well as the representatives of classes, several of them are also latent satires upon certain known men of our time. Some of these are admirable, but more especially Old Bags, Fighting Attie, and Peter Macgrawler. Long Ned and Augustus Tomlinson are exquisite. One of the finest scenes—that of the trial, where the judge is the father of the criminal, is taken from Mrs. Inchbald. With this exception, the work in its various parts, and as a whole, is a fine original. The author does not make his hero admired for any one bad quality, but for naturally high qualities independent of the worst circumstances. It is a skilful work of art, and its moral tendency is noble, healthy, and full of exhortations to the manful struggle after good.

The character of Philip Beaufort in "Night and Morning," is a fine conception, and as finely portrayed from

the moment that he is first shown a proud and pampered boy, imperious in his strength and beauty, onwards through the bitter trials of his "night," till by the energy of his will, always kept up to the mark by the intensity of his affections, he works his own way to clear "morning." His boyhood and youth are carried forward on a swelling tide of passion, which is sustained to the close of the work, and leaves the mind elevated by its contemplation. There is a great variety of character in the book: the rapid sketch of the father of Philip, and the exquisitely finished portrait of the mother, most pathetic in the dignity of her grief; the spoilt, gentle, selfish, idolized brother for whom the proud Philip works like a menial to be rewarded by ingratitude; the worldly uncle in high life, and the respectable uncle in the shopocracy; all are excellently drawn, but the interest is centred in the principal character. The story is equally well managed. The plot is complicated, yet clearly worked out; the incidents flow much less from outward circumstance than from the strong passions and proud will of the hero, by which he casts away over and over again the aid that would have saved him, rushes into danger and disaster, but at length works out his own regeneration, chastened and purified. The interest never flags; and those who can get through these three volumes with dry eyes, must be made of hard materials.

✓ "Zanoni" is the most harmonious as a work of art, the most imaginative, and the purest and highest in moral purpose of any of the works of Bulwer. A certain peculiarity of style has laid it open to the charge of imitation, and many of the ideas and sentiments gathered from Plato, from Schiller, Richter, and Goëthe, have induced superficial readers to term it a compilation. Sir Lytton Bulwer has been heard to declare his opinion that it was quite fair to take anything from an older author—if you could improve it. This opens a most dangerous door to human vanity, as it would excuse any one to himself, for taking anything. Our author must not therefore be surprised if this notion has occasionally laid him open to vexatious remarks from half-seeing censors. Notwithstanding any of its obligations, "Zanoni" is a truly original work; a finished design; embodying a great principle and pervaded by one leading idea. In the fable of "Zanoni" is depicted

the triumph of the sympathetic over the selfish nature ; both these terms being understood in their largest sense. Under the selfish, being comprised the pleasures of the intellect, the clear light of science, the love of the beautiful, the worship of art ;—under the sympathetic, love in its most devoted and spiritual meaning, love losing the sense of self, stronger than life and death, rendering sacrifice easy, hallowing sorrow, endowing the soul with courage and faith. In order to bring out the principle in the strongest manner some supernatural machinery is employed, and the hero is supposed to possess the knowledge of ages and the secret of immortality. Love is also represented as the means by which the mind grasps the beneficent order and harmony of the Universe, in which Death is not an exception, but an integral part when viewed in connection with Eternity. This truth may be attained also by pure reason, but the philosophical author has chosen to ascribe it to the intuitive teaching of pure passion. In like manner, Tennyson, in his fine poem of “Love and Death,” makes Love “pierce and cleave” the gloom in his address to Death :

“Thou art the shadow of life, and as the tree
Stands in the sun and shadows all beneath,
So in the light of great eternity
Life eminent creates the shade of death ;
The shadow passeth when the tree shall fall,
But I shall reign for ever over all.”

In the course of the story there are many valuable secondary suggestions and ideas. The new creation which opens to the eyes of those who are awakened to the grandeur and mystery of things, and seek a higher life and knowledge, is beautifully shadowed forth in the floating forms of light that seem to fill the air when the young aspirant, Glyndon, first inhales the elixir of life ; while the dread of “the world,” that common world which has always followed with its persecution and its scorn the best and the noblest, the strikers out of new paths, the pioneers and heralds of progression, this nameless dread is embodied with singular power in the “Dweller of the Threshold.” There is more still implied in this haunter of “first steps.” Every new birth is ushered in with a pang—every new idea enlarges the capacity for pain as well as for pleasure, and who ever felt the inspiration of a new and great feeling without

trembling? The following passage contains the imagery to which we have alluded :

“And now he distinctly saw shapes somewhat resembling in outline those of the human form, gliding slowly and with regular evolutions through the cloud. As they moved in majestic order, he heard a low sound—which each caught and echoed from the other ; a low sound, but musical, which seemed the chant of some unspeakably tranquil joy. Slowly they glided round and aloft, till, in the same majestic order, one after one, they floated through the casement and were lost in the moonlight ; then, as his eyes followed them, the casement became darkened with some object indistinguishable at the first gaze, but which sufficed mysteriously to change into ineffable horror the delight he had before experienced. By degrees this object shaped itself to his sight. It was as that of a human head, covered with a dark veil, through which glared with livid and demoniac fire, eyes that froze the marrow in his bones.”

This is fearfully beautiful painting. Many could bear witness to the truthfulness of its suggestions. Cowardly fear and distrust give the triumph to this phantom ; courage and faith alone can conquer it ; courage to brave danger or disgrace ; faith in the truth, love of the beauty and the good to which the mind aspires. In the narrative, the author has represented the presence of this loathsome thing as a necessary part of the ordeal which the neophyte must go through ; a presence only to be banished by those who can firmly confront its terrible eyes. It vanishes always before a steady gaze. The whole of the supernatural machinery of the story is, in like manner, founded on profound truths connected with the mysteries of our being. The fabled events represent, or are types of, the links of association, the sympathies and antipathies, the instincts, smothered or left undeveloped in common life by the nature of our education, pursuits, and habits, but not the less elemental principles of nature.

The character of Viola, the woman through whom Love asserts his pre-eminence—his “reign eternal over all” is exquisitely drawn in the first portion of the story. Her life as an actress, with the pathetic history of the musician Pisani, her father, are especially beautiful. The charm of the ideal is thrown over everything connected with her, and her purity, childlike and spotless, combined with her impassioned devotion to Zanoni, the hero, render the picture perfect. Out of this lovely character, however, arises the grand fault of the work, as an ethical harmony. It is the compromise of her passion for Zanoni by her maternal instinct over-mastering it. When she becomes a mother, she deserts her husband for the sake of her child. This is a heresy

against a pure and exalted love. It is too true that it happens very commonly in real life, but not with such a woman, and such a love. It was necessary to the course of the story to remove her from her great protector, yet some other means should have been invented. Deep nature is sacrificed to an immediate requisition of the narrative. The mistake is cleverly effected by the aid of superstition. But superstition could never have been so strong as her love—because, as we have said before, a great and ennobling passion is the voice of God in the soul, and banishes all weak fears. The exalted faith of Zanoni, and the heart-broken intensity of affection in Viola under the separation, are finely done; and the re-union still finer. They meet again in a dungeon in Paris in the Reign of Terror. Viola is condemned to die, and Zanoni relinquishes his “charmed life,” his immortality of youth to save her. He leaves her asleep when his guards call him to execution. She is unconscious of the terrible sacrifice, but awaking and missing him, a vision of the procession to the guillotine comes upon her; Zanoni radiant in his youth and beauty is there;—

“On to the *Barrière du Trône*! It frowns dark in the air—the giant instrument of murder! One after one to the glaive;—another, and another, and another! Mercy! O mercy! Is the bridge between the sun and the shades so brief?—brief as a sigh? There—there—his turn has come. ‘Die not yet; leave me not behind! Hear me—hear me!’ shrieked the inspired sleeper. ‘What! and thou smilest still!’ They smiled—those pale lips—and with the smile, the place of doom, the headsman, the horror vanished! With that smile, all space seemed suffused in eternal sunshine. Up from the earth he rose—he hovered over her—a thing not of matter—an idea of joy and light! Behind, Heaven opened, deep after deep; and the Hosts of Beauty were seen rank upon rank, afar; and ‘Welcome,’ in a myriad melodies broke from your choral multitude, ye People of the Skies—‘Welcome! O purified by sacrifice, and immortal only through the grave—this it is to die.’ And radiant amidst the radiant, the image stretched forth its arms, and murmured to the sleeper, ‘Companion of Eternity!—this it is to die!’ * * * *

“They burst into a cell, forgotten since the previous morning. They found there a young female, sitting upon her wretched bed; her arms crossed upon her bosom, her face raised upward; the eyes unclosed, and a smile of more than serenity,—of bliss upon her lips. Never had they seen life so beautiful; and as they crept nearer, and with noiseless feet, they saw that the lips breathed not, that the repose was of marble, that the beauty and the ecstasy were of death.”

We have quoted this beautiful passage because it ought to remain on record, singled out as an example of pure and exalted conception. To those who knew it before, it will be renewed pleasure; to those who did not, an inducement to become acquainted with the work from which it is selected.

It is strange that in a composition which embodies so

much high philosophy, the author should have taken so puerile a view of the French Revolution. He dwells only on its horrors,—a theme long since exhausted. True, they were many and great;—but slaughterous battles for legitimacy, and long ages of despotism, and inquisitions, and Sicilian massacres, and massacres of Saint Bartholomew, have had their horrors too.* Sir Lytton laments over “the throne and the altar!” Words of high and very ancient sound; but what besides words were they at that period? In a note to a passage in his *Zanoni*, he says, “Take away murder from the French Revolution, and it becomes the greatest farce ever played before the angels!” The greatest farce!—was the decrepitude and fall of the altar, then, a farce after all—the decrepitude and fall of the throne a farce, after all—the brutalized vices of the nobles, their despotism and all-but extinction as a nobility—were these things only a great farce? Rather say, the greatest and most frightful retribution, the most abused principle, the greatest expiatory sacrifice, the most comprehensive tragedy—any of these are nearer the mark, historically, morally, philosophically, and as matter of human feeling.

It is from passages such as this, strangely at variance with the philosophical spirit which is unquestionably manifested in the writings of this author, that he gives an impression of shallowness, and also of insincerity and affectation. Whatever be the cause, it is certain that he lays himself open to these charges. Without coinciding in the accusation of shallowness, it is fair to say that he cannot pretend to the distinction of an original or profound thinker, or a discoverer of truth; but it is much to be capable of perceiving and appreciating truth when dug up and displayed by others, and this Bulwer does; he does more, he is able to assimilate it, and make it in some respects his own, by giving it new forms and colours, all in harmony with itself. His affectations we take to proceed, partly, from the fact that his mind does not always keep up to the high mark it attains when imbued with the philosophy it is capable of comprehending, but does actually disport itself in certain fripperies and follies; and, partly, from the necessity he is under of displaying no more truth to the world than the world can bear with complacency.

* “Let them add to this the fact that *seventy-two thousand persons suffered death by the hands of the executioner* during the reign of Henry the Eighth, and judge between, &c.” Macaulay’s *Essays*, vol. i., p. 250.

An honest-minded reviewer of the works of Sir E. L. Bulwer has said of him, "his soul is not brave enough for truth." This is scarcely correct: he is brave enough to face any truth, but his policy holds check upon his soul. He knows what a strong bull-headed thing the world is, and he loves popularity too well to risk having it trampled down by hoofs. He never, therefore, goes too far beyond his age; but he keeps up with it always. Hence he maintains his popularity, and perhaps when his intellect feels the necessity of reining in, it turns a little restive and indulges in some curvets at the expense of the "gentle readers" he feels obliged to humour. It is further to be admitted that he is essentially aristocratic in his tastes and feelings; that in his writings there is no true sympathy with humanity until it is refined and polished. Grant this, however, and he is a great writer. The true delineation of rough nature must not be expected of him. The unpolished diamond he would recognize, and turn coldly from it: nature, with him, requires to be perfected—by art. He is prone to idealise all his characters. With few exceptions they are the reverse of real or substantial. Not that we would have them real, but with rather a larger portion of reality. His walk, however, is the least of all frequented in this age, and he pursues it, in general, worthily.

If Sir Lytton Bulwer had not already established a higher reputation, he might have fairly laid claim to distinction as an historian from his well studied, classical, and elegant work entitled "Athens, its Rise and Fall;" in which he has occupied the truer and more extensive field over which history ought to extend, instead of confining himself to the mere chronicle of political events, and the vicissitudes of war. The progress of the arts and literature of Athens, comprising some fine criticism on its drama, are distinguishing features of the two volumes already published, and its philosophy, social manners and customs are promised in the two which are to complete the work.

The "Last of the Barons" ought to have been published in the form of history, entitled "Chronicles of the Great Earl of Warwick," or something equivalent: it would have been valuable to all interested in such matters. Read as a romance, it is intolerably tedious and heavy, and its authenticity and elaborate research are thrown away; —for the question "Is it all true?" must contin-

ually occur, just as children are apt to interrupt the thread of a story with that inquiry. Doubtless, historical novels are among the most popular we have, as, for instance, those of Sir Walter Scott, and "Rienzi," by Bulwer himself; but, in them, the fiction predominates, in the "Last of the Barons," it is the reverse.

Sir E. L. Bulwer is, in private, a very different and superior man to the character indicated by the portraits of him. That by Chalon, conveys the last infirmities of mawkish sentimentality and personal affectation; whereas Sir Lytton is very frank, easy, careless (sometimes, perhaps, studiously so), good-natured, pleasant, conversible, and without one tint of those lack-a-daisy qualities conferred upon him by the artists. If his sitting had its "weak moment," the artist ought not to have copied it, but to have taken the best of the truth of the whole man.

Now, it *may* be the fact, that nothing would convey so complete a conviction to the mind of Sir Lytton of his own genius and general talents, and so perfect a sensation of inward satisfaction and happiness, as to be seated at a table—say in the character of an Ambassador—with his fingers covered with dazzling rings, and his feet delightfully pinched in a pair of looking-glass boots with Mother-Shipton heels, while he held a conversation with two diplomatic foreigners of distinction, from different courts, each in his own language; took up the thread of an argument with a philosopher on his right; put in every now and then a capital repartee to the last remark of a wit at his left elbow, while at every moment's pause he continued three letters lying before him—one to the Minister of State for the Home Department, one to a friend (inclosing a postscript for his tailor), and one on love, containing some exquisite jokes in French and Italian on the Platonic Republic—and all those conversations, and arguments, and repartees, and writings, continuing at the same time—each being fed from the same fount with enough to last till the turn came round. And finally, that he should discover the drift of one diplomatist, talk over the other to his views, confute the philosopher, silence the court wit, convey the most important information to the English Premier, give his friend all the advice he asked, and something far more subtle besides, (together with the clearest directions and fractional measurements in the postscript,) and that the love-letter should not only answer every possible pur-

pose of kindliness, delight, amusement and admiration, but should, by a turn of the wrist, be easily convertible into an exquisite chapter for a future novel.

But where is the great mischief of any private fancies of this kind, which moreover have some foundation in an undoubted versatility and general accomplishments? Even in the matter of external daintiness, a great deal too much fuss is made about it, and many ill-natured remarks vented, as if no other eminent man had a private hobby. If the private hobbies of the majority of our leading minds, and well-known men of genius, were displayed, the eyes of the Public would open to the largest circle, and its mouth become pantomimic. One great author has a fancy for conjuring tricks, which he performs "in a small circle," to admiration; another would play at battledore and shuttle-cock, till he dropped; another or two (say a dozen) prefer a *ballet* to any other work of art; one likes to be a tavern-king, and to be placed in the "chair;" another prefers to sit on a wooden bench round the fire of a hedge alehouse, and keep all the smock-frocks in a roar; two or three are amateur mesmerists, and practice "the passes" with prodigious satisfaction; one poet likes to walk in a high wind and a pelting rain, without his hat, and repeating his verses aloud; another smokes during half the day, and perhaps half the night, with his feet upon the fender and puffing the cloud up the chimney; another sits rolled up in a bear's-skin, and as soon as he has got the "idea," he rushes out to write it down; another has a fancy for playing all sorts of musical instruments, and could not be left alone in a room with organ, bag-pipe, or bassoon, but in a few minutes a symphony would begin to vibrate through the wall; and if so much is thought of an over-attention to a man's bodily outside, what should be said of those who—as one would fill a tub—pour or cram into the bodily *inside* so much that is not harmless, but injures health, and with it injures the powers of the mind, and the moral feelings, besides shortening the duration of life. We should look into ourselves, and be tolerant.

Notwithstanding the popularity of Sir E. L. Bulwer, we hardly think he has been sufficiently appreciated as a great novelist by the majority, even of those critics who admire his works; while the hostile attacks and depreciations have been very numerous and unceasing. Of his philosophy we would say in brief that we believe

the world is hardly in the main so bad as he considers it, and certainly with many more exceptions than he seems to admit; and that he himself is a much better man than he knows of, and only wants more faith in genuine and sincere nature to be himself the possessor of as large a share as his faith.

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

"Madame Tussaud describes * * * * as a fine handsome-looking man, with a florid complexion, and a military air. He had presided over some of the massacres in the provinces."—MADAME TUSSAUD'S *Memoirs*.

"With regard to the personal descriptions of the different characters introduced throughout the work, it may be confidently asserted, that they are likely to be more accurate than those generally given by other authors."—*IBID. Preface*.

FROM the historical novel and romance, as reoriginated, in modern times, by Madame de Genlis and Sir Walter Scott, and adopted with such high success by Sir E. L. Bulwer, and with such extensive popularity by Mr. James, there has of late years sprung up a sort of lower or less historical romance, in which the chief part of the history consisted in old dates, old names, old houses, and old clothes. But dates in themselves are but numerals, names only sounds, houses and streets mere things to be copied from prints and records; and any one may do the same with regard to old coats, and hats, wigs, waitscoats, and boots. Now, we know that "all flesh is grass," but grass is not flesh, for all that; nor is it of any use to show us hay for humanity.

To throw the soul back into the vitality of the past, to make the imagination dwell with its scenes and walk hand in hand with knowledge; to live with its most eminent men and women, and enter into their feelings and thoughts as well as their abodes, and be sensitive with them of the striking events and ruling influences of the time; to do all this, and to give it a vivid form in words, so as to bring it before the eye, and project it into the sympathies of the modern world, this is to write the truest history no less than the finest historical fiction; this is to be a great historical romancist—something very different from a reviver of old clothes.

Such are the extremes of this class; and if there be very few who in execution approach the higher standard, so there are, perhaps, none who do not display some merits which redeem them from the charge of a mere raking and furbishing up of by-gone materials.

But as there is a great incursion of these un-historical un-romantic romances into the literature of the present day, and fresh adventurers marshalling their powers of plunder on the borders, it may be of some service that we have drawn a strong line of demarcation, displaying the extreme distinctions, and leaving the application to the general judgment.

With regard to the Newgate narrative of "Jack Sheppard" and the extraordinarily extensive notoriety it obtained for the writer, upon the residuum of which he founded his popularity, so much just severity has already been administered from criticism and from the opinion of the intellectual portion of the public, and its position has been so fully settled, that we are glad to pass over it without farther animadversion.

The present popularity of Mr. Ainsworth could not have risen out of its own materials. His so-called historical romance of "Windsor Castle" is not to be regarded as a work of literature open to serious criticism. It is a picture book, and full of very pretty pictures. Also full of catalogues of numberless suits of clothes. It would be difficult to open it any where without the eye falling on such words as cloth of gold, silver tissue, green jerkin, white plumes.

Looking for an illustration, we are stopped at the second page. Here is the introduction of two characters :—

"His countenance was full of thought and intelligence ; and he had a broad, lofty brow, shaded by a profusion of light brown ringlets ; a long, straight, and finely-formed nose ; a full, sensitive, and well-chiselled mouth ; and a pointed chin. His eyes were large, dark, and somewhat melancholy in expression ; and his complexion possessed that rich, clear, brown tint, constantly met with in Italy or Spain, though but seldom seen in a native of our colder clime. His dress was rich but sombre, consisting of a doublet of black satin, worked with threads of Venetian gold ; hose of the same material, and similarly embroidered ; a shirt curiously wrought with black silk, and fastened at the collar with black enamelled clasps ; a cloak of black velvet, passmented with gold, and lined with crimson satin ; a flat black velvet cap, set with pearls and goldsmith's work, and adorned with a short white plume ; and black velvet buskins. His arms were rapier and dagger, both having gilt and graven handles, and sheaths of black velvet.

"As he moved along the sound of voices chanting vespers arose from Saint George's Chapel ; and while he paused to listen to the solemn strains, a door in that part of the castle used as the King's privy lodgings, opened, and a person advanced towards him. The new-comer had broad, brown, martial-looking features, darkened still more by a thick coal-black beard, clipped short in the fashion of the time, and a pair of enormous moustachios. He was accoutred in a habergeon, which gleamed from beneath the folds of a russet-coloured mantle, and wore a steel cap in lieu of a bonnet on his head."—*Windsor Castle*, p. 2—3.

The book is also full of processions, banquets, royal

hunting parties, courtiers, lords, and jesters, who are indeed "very dull fools." It has, moreover, a demon ghost in the form of Herne the Hunter, who, according to this legend, led King Henry VIII. and all his court the life of a dog. As to plot or story it does not pretend to any.

"Old St. Paul's, a tale of the Plague and the Fire," is a diluted imitation of some parts of De Foe's "Plague in London," varied with libertine adventures of Lord Rochester and his associates. It is generally dull, except when it is revolting. There are descriptions of nurses who poison or smother their patients, wretched prisoners roasted alive in their cells, and one felon who thrusts his arms through the red-hot bars—"literally" is added, by way of apology.

A critic recently remarked of Mr. Ainsworth's "St. James's, or the Court of Queen Anne," that the delineations of character in it were mere portraits, and nothing more. "The business in which they are engaged has no vitality for any but themselves—it is dull, *passé* in every sense of the word, and they leave not a single incident or memento of romance or poetry behind them by which to identify them in our hearts; so that, in truth, we turn back from these cut-and-dry dummies to Maclise's portrait of Mr. Ainsworth quite as a matter of relief; and as we sit contemplating his handsome and cheerful lineaments, wonder how, in the name of all that is romantic, he will get through the task which he has assigned to himself, of rendering the dullest period of our history amusing to our 'mass' of readers. It is one thing to write an historical romance; another, to write a romantic history; and a third to write a history without *any* romance." This is all very just, and we might quote many similar opinions.

It has become very plain, that brief as this paper is, the natural termination of it can no longer be delayed. The truth must be told. This paper is a joint-production. No sooner were the first two paragraphs seen, than the article was taken out of the writer's hands in order to prevent a severity which seemed advancing with alarming strides. But the continuation by another hand appearing to be very little better, recourse was had to a quotation from the author's works, introduced by a third hand; and finally, as it was feared by the hint at "similar opinions" that further critical references were intended, it was unanimously agreed that no-

thing more should be done in that way, except to coincide with the remark made above, as to the handsome and good-tempered portrait of a man who is usually spared in public, because so much esteemed and regarded in private.

MRS. SHELLEY.

“ Out of the depths of Nature—
Substance, shades, or dreams,
Thou shalt call up—sift—and take
What seems fitting best to make
A structure, fraught with direful gleams,
Or one all filled with sunny beams.”

“ Oh you, who sentried stand upon the temple wall ;
Holy, and nearer to the glory's golden fall,
Moon-like, possess and shed at large its rays !”

CORNELIUS MATHEWS.

“ ————— For though
Not to be pierced by the dull eye whose beam
Is spent on outward shapes, there is a way
To make a search into its hidden'st passage.”—SHIRLEY.

THE imaginative romance as distinguished from the historical romance, and the actual or social life fiction, is of very rare occurrence in the literature of the present day. Whether the cause lies with the writers or the public, or the character of events and influence now operating on society, certain it is that the imaginative romance is almost extinct among us.

We had outgrown the curdling horrors and breathless apprehensions of Mrs. Ratcliffe, and the roseate pomps of Miss Jane Porter. But why have we no Frankensteins, for that fine work is in advance of the age ?

Perhaps we ought to seek the cause of the scarcity in the difficulty of the production. A mere fruitless, purposeless excitement of the imagination will not do now. The imaginative romance is required to be a sort of epic—a power to advance—a something to propel the frame of things. Such is Bulwer's “Zanoni,” a profound and beautiful work of fiction, which has been reviewed in its place, and in which Godwin's “St. Leon” found a worthy successor. With this single exception, the first place among the romances of our day belongs to the “Frankenstein” of Mrs. Shelley.

The solitary student with whom the longing desire to pry into the secrets of nature ends in the discovery of the vital principle itself, and the means of communicating it, thus describes the consummation of his toils.

We quote the passage as illustrative of the genius by which the extravagance of the conception is rendered subservient to artistical effect :—

“It was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

“How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips.”—*Frankenstein*, vol. i., p. 97, 98.

The Monster in “*Frankenstein*,” sublime in his ugliness, his simplicity, his passions, his wrongs and his strength, physical and mental, embodies in the wild narrative more than one distinct and important moral theory or proposition. In himself he is the type of a class deeply and cruelly aggrieved by nature—the Deformed or hideous in figure or countenance, whose sympathies and passions are as strong as their bodily deformity renders them repulsive. An amount of human woe, great beyond reckoning, have such experienced. When the Monster pleads his cause against cruel man, and when he finally disappears on his raft on the icy sea to build his own funeral pile, he pleads the cause of all that class who have so strong a claim on the help and sympathy of the world, yet find little else but disgust, or, at best, neglect.

The Monster created by *Frankenstein* is also an illustration of the embodied consequences of our actions. As he, when formed and endowed with life, became to his imaginary creator an everlasting ever-present curse, so may one single action, nay a word, or it may be a thought, thrown upon the tide of time become to its originator a curse, never to be recovered, never to be shaken off.

“*Frankenstein*” suggests yet another analogy. It teaches the tragic results of attainment when an impetuous irresistible passion hurries on the soul to its doom. Such tragic results are the sacrificial fires out of which humanity rises purified. They constitute one

form of the great ministry of Pain. The conception of "Frankenstein" is the converse of that of the delightful German fiction of Peter Schlemil, in which the *loss* of his shadow (reputation or honour) leads on the hero through several griefs and troubles to the great simplicity of nature and truth; while in "Frankenstein" the *attainment* of a gigantic reality leads through crime and desolation to the same goal, but it is only reached in the moment of death.

In "Pantika, or Traditions of the most Ancient Times," by William Howitt, there is much imaginative power, and great invention. These tales abound in lofty thoughts, and the descriptions are both beautiful and grand. The "Exile of Heaven" is, perhaps, the finest of the series both in design and execution. There is sublimity in the rapid view of creation as witnessed by the Angel, and in the picture of Cain, and in that of Satan. There is also gorgeous and glowing painting in the description of the voluptuous city of Lilith the Queen of Beauty, whom the Angel in his presumption had created to be more perfect than Eve, and through whom he had lost Heaven and brought evil on earth. The contrast between this imaginative creation and that of Frankenstein is curious. The punishment here comes through beauty, instead of deformity. Lilith is made too beautiful; it is impossible to sympathise with the Angel's hatred of her, or to believe she was evil. This is the fault of the story. The attempt to make her exquisitely beautiful, yet not an object of any sympathy, is unsuccessful. The fact is, "friend Howitt" has got into a very ticklish position. We venture to submit that the loveliness of his misleading fair one ought to have been made to fade gradually before the view, as the merely external always does in its influence upon the senses. This would, at least, have shown an individual triumph over her; but as the story stands she is triumphant (as at present the sensual beauty is in the world), with every prospect of continuing so, according to the sequel of this gorgeous fable.

There is a high purpose in the Angel's final humility, his submission to the existence of evil, and to the impossibility of obliterating the consequences of action. The teachings which lead to this are finely managed;—as when, in his wanderings through space, he sees a dim planet covered with water, suddenly become con-

vulsed and tossed in hideous commotion, and while he murmurs at the ruin he expects to witness, beholds a fair world emerge from these fiery and terrific throes ; the mountains have risen, the waters are confined to their appointed bed, the dry land is ready to become clothed with verdure, and a great and beneficent work has been done.

Most of the other tales are built too much on the fierce and exclusive spirit of the ancient Jewish people. They consequently breathe a vindictive, blood-thirsty tone. The horrible punishment of the Starving Man who kills and eats the Scape-goat, and then finds himself possessed by all the crimes of mankind ; the wretched case of the poor Soothsayer cursed by the Hebrew Prophet, and detained in bed for a whole year by a congregation of all the Idols in his room (standing round his bed), who will not suffer him to move, and keep in his life by feeding him on oil-cake, till he almost turns into a mummy, and at last sees the Idols begin to crumble round him, and reptiles crawling about among the ruins ; these are fine and striking inventions, worthy of an eastern imagination, and only assume a repulsive appearance because the Infinite Power of the universe is represented as causing them. If Allah or Buddha had done this, we should have felt nothing of the kind.

Had the author of the "Manuscripts of Erdely" possessed clearness of conception and arrangement of his subject in the same degree as he is gifted with imagination, invention, and fine power of developing character and describing both action and scenery, his work would have been entitled to one of the highest places in romance. But Mr. Stephens has destroyed the effect of his work by the prodigality of his incidents and personages, and by the confusion of his method of dealing with them. There is matter for four different plots, with a hero and heroine to each, in his one romance. He gives evidence of a learned research and historical knowledge ; we find also a puzzling array of names, not unlike that which is to be found in Robert Browning's "Sordello." There are, besides, too many quotations, and the fault is the less pardonable in a writer of such great original power.

We have said that there is a fine power of description in this author. In attempting an illustration, we are puzzled where to choose, so many present themselves.

The following beautiful and poetical passage must suffice. A man pure in character but maligned on earth has appealed to the spirit of his dead wife for sympathy :—

“ Spirit of the departed ! do you know that I am innocent ?

“ He raised his eyes, and a curdling thrill crept through his veins ! for, lo ! the prayer, that, almost silently, had welled up from the sanctuary of his soul, had reached its aim, *and had an answer*. The far depths of the room became gradually brightened with a glory, not of this world ; and a dim, thin, human shape, slowly developed its indistinct and shadowy outline, by insensibly divesting itself, as it were, of one immortal shroud after another, till it stood, pale and confessed, in ethereal repose.”—*Manuscripts of Erdely*, vol. i., p. 307.

Mrs. Shelley has published, besides “ Frankenstein,” a romance entitled “ Valperga,” which is less known than the former, but is of high merit. She exhibits in her hero, a brave and successful warrior, arriving at the height of his ambition, endowed with uncommon beauty and strength, and with many good qualities, yet causes him to excite emotions of reprobation and pity, because he is cruel and a tyrant, and because in the truth of things he is unhappy. This is doing a good work, taking the false glory from the eyes and showing things as they are. There are two female characters of wonderful power and beauty. The heroine is a lovely and noble creation. The work taken as a whole, if below “ Frankenstein” in genius, is yet worthy of its author and of her high rank in the aristocracy of genius, as the daughter of Godwin and Mary Wolstonecraft, and the widow of Shelley.

ROBERT MONTGOMERY.

"Parnassus is transformed to Zion Hill,
And Jewry-palms her steep ascents do fill.
Now good St. Peter weeps pure Helicon,
And both the Maries make a music-moan ;—
Yea, and the prophet of the heavenly lyre,
Great Solomon, sings in the English quire,
And is become a new-found Sonnetist !"

BISHOP HALL. *Satire 8.*

Mr. P.—"My friend !—(*patting his shoulder*)—this is not a bell. (*Patting the tin bell.*) It is a very fine Organ !"—*Drama of Punch.*

HUMOUR may be divided into three classes ; the broad, the quiet, and the covert. Broad humour is extravagant, voluble, obtrusive, full of rich farce and loud laughter :—quiet humour is retiring, suggestive, exciting to the imagination, few of words, and its pictures grave in tone :—covert humour, (which also comprises quiet humour,) is allegorical, typical, and of cloven tongue—its double sense frequently delighting to present the reverse side of its real meaning, to smile when most serious, to look grave when most facetiously disposed. Of this latter class are the comic poems of the ingenious Robert Montgomery, a humourist whose fine original vein has never been rightly appreciated by his contemporaries. He has been scoffed at by the profane for writing unmeaning nonsense, when that very nonsense had the most disinterested and excellent moral aim ; he has passed for a quack, when he nobly made his muse a martyr ; he has been laughed at, when he should have been admired ; he has been gravely admired when his secret laughter should have found response in every inside. He has been extensively purchased ; but he has not been understood.

In these stirring times when theologies are looking up, and the ribald tongues of fifty thousand sectarian pulpits wag wrathfully around the head of the Established Maternity ; while she herself is suffering intestine pains from dangerous wars, and the pure spirit of Religion is wandering and waiting in the distant fields ; it behoves all those thrifty shepherds who are still disposed to multiply the goods of this world, and take up

the burdens and vain pomps which others being less strong, may, peradventure, find too onerous,—it behoves such shepherds, we repeat, to look keenly through and beneath all these struggles and backslidings, and to watch over the movements of wealthy congregations.

It is not to be denied that with the vigorous elements which distinguish the spirit of the present age, are mingled many weaknesses and short-comings; that winding about its truthfulness there are many falsehoods and hypocrisies; that the battle for the right is but too frequently mixed up and confused with the battle for the wrong; and that amidst so much that is high-minded and sincere, there is perhaps still more that is selfish and cunning, that is, in fact, not genuine but humbugeous.

“The London Charivari,” to which allusion has previously been made on page 163, comprises the three classes of humour described at the opening of this paper, and may also be said to have a wit and humour peculiar to itself. The application of these faculties, being always liable to exert a powerful influence for good or evil, has been from the very first commencement of that periodical, devoted to the cause of justice, of good feeling, and of truth. The most “striking” characteristic of this “Punch” is his hatred and ridicule of all grave-faced pretences and charlatanry. Considering his very unscrupulous nature, it is remarkable how little there is of actual private personality in him. If he strikes at a man domestically, which is very rare, it is by no means on account of his quiet “hearth-stone,” but of his public humbugosity. Never before were so many witty, humorous, and choice-spirited individuals amicably associated together for anything like so long a period; and never before did so many perfectly free-spoken wits and humourists indulge their fancies and make their attacks with so good-natured a spirit, and without one spark of wanton mischief and malignity. It is a marked sign of good in the present age.

In this same light, and to these same moral aims,—though with a characteristic difference such as marks all original genius—do we regard the public character and works of the much-admired yet equally maligned Robert Montgomery. At some future time, and when his high purpose can no longer be injured by a discovery of its inner wheels and movements, springs and fine escapements—at such a period he may perhaps vouchsafe

a *key* to all his great works ; meantime, however, in his defence, because we are unable to bear any longer the spectacle of so total a misconception of a man's virtues and talents in the public mind, we will offer a few elucidatory comments upon two of his larger productions.

The poem of "Satan" is evidently the work of a great free-thinker. Far be it from us to use this much-abused and perverted expression in any but its true sense, with regard to Mr. Robert Montgomery. Freely he thinks of all spiritual and mundane things ; in fact, his freedom amounts to a singular degree of familiarity with those Essences and Subjects concerning which nearly everybody else entertains too much awe, and doubt of themselves, to venture upon anything like proximity or circumambience. But though the thinking faculty of Mr. Robert Montgomery makes thus free, it is only within the bounds of the "Establishment," as defined in his Preface, though not necessarily governed in all other respects,—to use his own inimitable words,—by "the sternness of adamantine orthodoxy."* In support of the spiritual part of his treatment of his subject, and referring to the free-thinking of his hero (who is not only the Prince of Air, but the London Perambulator, as proved by this poem), Mr. Montgomery quotes the following from high authority :—"Thus the Devil has undoubtedly a great degree of speculative knowledge in divinity ; having been as it were, educated in the best divinity school in the universe," &c. He also quotes from the same author (Jonathan Edwards) that "it is evident he (the Devil) has a great speculative knowledge of the nature of experimental religion." These preliminary statements of the more enlarged view we should take of the Satanic mind, and its many unsuspected acquirements, together with much more which we cannot venture to quote, will be found in the Preface to the fourth edition of this accomplished Prince.

Having stated the spiritual or "experimental" drift ; we have only now to point to the worldly activity or practical application, and we shall at once find a key to this sublimely humorous design, and its high moral purpose. This application we shall find in the covert parody of the "Devil's Walk" (the one which has been ascribed jointly to Porson and to Southey), which for the force

* Preface to the Fifth Edition of "Satan," p. 2.

and piquancy of its satire has rarely been surpassed. Accordingly, Mr. Robert Montgomery considers the hero of his poem, as a real, personal, and highly intellectual agent, walking about London—he distinctly alludes to London—so that, to follow out this poet's excursion, we might meet Satan on 'Change, hear his voice on Waterloo Bridge, see him taking a jelly in the saloon of Drury Lane theatre, or seated demurely in a pew at Church, with a psalter stuck on his off-horn. Mr. Montgomery intimates and suggests all these sort of things,—nay, he directly describes many of the circumstances. For instance, Satan goes to the play. To what part of the house is not said. His natural locality would of course be the pit, and, for this very reason, he would probably prefer the one shilling gallery; but as Mr. Montgomery clearly explains that his hero went there on business—to collect materials for this very poem, which is written as a diabolico-theological and philosophical soliloquy—it is to be presumed that he was in the boxes. He thus describes a few of his observations, and personal sensations.

“Music and Pomp their mingling spirit shed
Around me; beauties in their cloud-like robes
Shine forth,—a scenic paradise, it glares
Intoxication through the reeling sense
Of flush'd enjoyment.”

Satan, Book V.

The comparison of a theatrical scene with a scene

“Upon the *forehead* of these fearless times”

in paradise, and made by one who had actually been in both places, would be more bold than reverent, in any other writer; nor are we by any means sure that Satan or his poet could show the slightest foundation for it. But we bow to their joint authority. He next describes the different classes of the audience. Some wish to mount upon Shakspeare's wings, and “win a flash” of his thought; but the second, he says, are “a sensual tribe;”

“Convened to hear romantic harlots sing,
On forms to banquet a lascivious gaze,
While the bright perfidy of wanton eyes
Through brain and spirit darts delicious fire!”

Ibid.

Well may this stern “spirit” feel it delicious, after the very different kind of flame to which he has been elsewhere accustomed. This is to write philosophy and history, moral satire and autobiography, all under one highly humorous head.

The main object of the poem of "Satan," however ingeniously it may be covered up, is to work out the deep satire of the old proverb of the "Devil quoting Scripture;" in fact, he very ably defends in his Prefaces, the propriety of displaying Satan as a great preaching LL.D. in private, or a D.D. hypocrite in public. Let any one read his Prefaces—they *must* see his fine aim. Hence, we shall discover in this sublime poem a succession of well-glossed blows and thrusts at all those clerical brethren who are not guided and governed in their duties and efforts by "the sternness of adamantine orthodoxy." It will, to any close observer, be perceived that the work throughout, shows no quarter to Dissent or Tergiversation; nor to any of the proud visions of Newfangledness, which have of late exalted their dark antlers above the horns of the average humility.

"Upon the *forehead* of these fearless times
I know the haughtiness that now exults:
But let the modern in his pride, beware!"

Satan, b. iv.

Equally, in melodious cornopæan strains does he breathe forth a wail over cornucopian pluralities. Here are his own soft yet reproachful, sweet yet terrible words—no German flute was ever more tenderly searching, nor, when based on an ophecleide accompaniment, more confounding.

"Partaken mercies are forgotten things.
But Expectation hath a grateful heart
Hailing the smile of promise from afar;
Enjoyment dies into ingratitude," &c.

Ibid.

And presently afterwards in speaking of "haughty-featured England," he compares certain proud authorities, to—

"A hell-born feeling such as I would nurse.

* * *

Of Mammon, that vile despot of the soul.
The happy meekness of contented minds
Is fretted with ambition," &c.

Ibid, b. iv.

Ahem! Really this is a very sad state of things. Amidst all this fine comic writing who can fail to see the sadness of the subtle truth that lurks beneath the assumed gravity. The hero of the poem playing the nurse to a juvenile compatriot (in the first line of the preceding quotation) is an equally dark and "palpable" hit at the very dangerous teachings of various branches

of Dissent, and sections of the Church itself; while the "happy meekness" of those "contented minds" which are "fretted with ambition" quietly and quaintly slips in a reflection that must have caused the sounding-board of many a pulpit to tremble with the vibratory effluence of the Conscience beneath. Moreover, as Satan *warms* with his theme, he becomes yet more direct in his attack, though we are not quite sure at what denomination of the unorthodox he levels his fork—

"Some gracious, grand, and most accomplished few,
Each with a little kingdom in his brain,
Who club together to re-cast the world,
And love so many that they care for none," &c.

Ibid, b. vi.

Such is the main-spring of the covered movement "capped and jewelled," which is discoverable in the great poem of "Satan." That there are many branch-movements and inferior wheels playing upon the complex circle of general lay society, is equally apparent, even as was done in its prototype (the "Devil's Walk,") but we cannot give space to their examination. A few insulated passages, illustrative of poetical excellencies, of the opinion secretly entertained by the poet of himself, and of the character of the accomplished Prince, are all that can be attempted. Of the latter he finely says—

"His nature was a whirlpool of desires,
And mighty passions perilously mixed,
That with the darkness of the demon world
Had something of the light of Heaven."

Ibid, b. ii.

With what graceful ingenuity does the poet seem to say so much in the first line just quoted, and yet say nothing; because it is clear that desires, in a whirlpool of themselves, could not exist as any one definite desire. The line, therefore, is a terrific nothing. What follows, no doubt furnished Milton with the idea of *his* Satan, whose form had not yet lost all its "original brightness; nor appeared less than archangel ruined." It is hence very evident that Milton, by the inspiration of his genius, foresaw what Robert Montgomery would say, and wisely availed himself of the poetic revelation. Montgomery's "Satan" is, nevertheless, disposed to be complimentary to Milton, who, he says, is

"Flaming with visions of eternal glare!"

Ibid, b. v.

The compliment has rather a professional look; but it should be remembered from whose mouth this pro-

ceeds. The same great master of light and shade also favours us with the following portrait :—

“Then mark the hypocrite of pious mould,
For ever putting on unearthly moods,
And looking lectures with his awful eyes, &c.

Or sternly paints some portraiture of sin,
But feels himself the model whence he drew.”

Ibid, b. iii.

We are upon dangerous ground, we know ; but it is ever thus in dealing with great humourists. One never scarcely knows where to have them. He proceeds in this strain :—

“Meanwhile, I flatter the surpassing fool,

Too mean for virtue, too polite for vice.”

Ibid, b. iii.

This Prince is becoming personal, and we must therefore conclude with one more flash of his pen at those who, impelled “by frenzied glory,” will venture on “till dashed to ruin ;” and he then makes an apostrophe to the “Review of Departed Days” of poetry—

“By whom, as beacon-light for time unborn,
The past might well have risen—hast forgot
The law of retribution in thy love
Of fame, and adoration to the dead.—
A war awakes !—*what poetry is here,*” &c.

Ibid, b. iv.

All that remains, therefore, with reference to the Princely Preacher’s prolonged soliloquy, is to give one specimen of the “poetry,” as abstract art, of his—we had almost said—Serene Highness, so very amiable does he appear in these pages :—

“So may it ever be ! let ages gone—
Whence monuments, by sad experience piled,
Might o’er unheeded days a warning frown—
Like buried lumber, in oblivion sleep ;
Experience is the sternest foe of hell.”

Ibid.

How novel a face does even the commonest proverb wear, when rouged and rabbit-pawed by genius ! The last line admirably conveys the intimation of what “a burnt child” both dreads and hates ; or, perhaps, it would rather infer that those who are burnt most become the most implacably hot. Our last quotation must be in illustration of the fine “keeping” which exists in this poem as a work of art. Other poems seek to rise to a climax, now and then, and usually towards the close ; but this very properly descends, and thor-

oughly illustrates "the art of sinking in poetry" described by Dean Swift. Let us observe how, step by step, from primitive elements to chaos, thence to the Satanic solitude, thence to a chorus of thunder-clouds, thence to an earthly commotion, thence (like the last revival of a dying candle) to nature's reel of anguish, and thence—to a small geographic familiarity.

"I love this passion of the Elements,
This mimicry of chaos, in their might
Of storm!—And here, in my lone awfulness,
While every cloud a thunder-hymn repeats,
Earth throbs, and nature in convulsion reels,
Farewell to England!"

Ibid, b. vi.

This is a truly unique specimen of the bathetic, and does his Unserene Profundity the most abysmal degree of credit.

Impressed with the deepest admiration of his sublimity and covert humour, we pass onwards, bowing, through his other works, and beneath their walls and towers of many editions, until we bow ourselves into the presence of Mr. Robert Montgomery's "Woman." As a poem, the subject is both human and divine; but it has moreover a secret and occult purpose of the most magnanimous kind.

Ostensibly this poem entitled "Woman" is a versified flattery, extending through upwards of three thousand three hundred lines, and it also abounds with sentiments of gallantry and of chivalry, which in these dull days of matter-of-fact courtship is really quite refreshing to meet with. One specimen will suffice:—

"Next Chivalry, heroic child,
With brow erect, and features mild,
Placed Love upon his matchless throne,
For gallantry to guard alone.
Then, woman! in that reign of heart,
How peerless was thy magic part!"

And shall we, in a venal age,
When love hath grown more coldly sage,
With frigid laugh and frown decry
The bright return of Chivalry?—
The trumpet-music of the past,
In tales of glory doom'd to last,—
No longer must one echo stir
The pulse of English character?

Woman, canto ii.

But while the exoteric adulations of the fair, and semblances of a yearning to restore the romance of ancient days of chivalry, with his suggestions for a new order

of Church Militant, might lead one to confer upon his gallant reverence the title of the Spiritual Quixote, there lurks beneath all this an esoteric design yet more magnanimous, and of still greater purity of self-devotion. Compared with this "the tales of glory doom'd to last" (let us observe his covert contempt of such glory in the expression of *doom'd*) will be regarded as the mere toys and gilded brutalities of a rude age: nor shall we pay further attention to those bright external attractions of the fair, which, as this poet says, by their "*ray of undiscern'd control*,"—

"Advanced above life's daily sphere,
Disclosed her radiance, full and near;
And kindled for beclouded man
The light that only woman can."

Woman, c. ii.

The very bad grammar by which the last couplet is beclouded, (and which indeed is so marked a feature in this, and other poems of the same inspired penman) will do much to prove that Mr. Robert Montgomery always has ulterior designs far above and beyond all the materiality of mere philological expression, and that his muse is not amenable to any of its known laws and requisitions.

The secret purpose, then, which is concealed with so much subtle humour, like a bright serpent, beneath all the superincumbent rubbish-couplets of this wonderful work of "*Woman*" is nothing less than an attempt to bring about a thorough reformation in Art, by means of a thorough purification of the public taste in poetry. This reformation and this purification he seeks to accomplish by the converse of the usually received notions as to the required process. Observing that to give the public the most pure and refined poetical productions does not answer the desired end, because they are not read, or, when read, only appreciated by the few, the high-soaring, disinterested, and original mind of Robert Montgomery has alighted upon the idea of opening the eyes of the public by a master-stroke of genius; *viz.*, by giving it a production which it would read, and of a kind which should display the strongest possible contrast to all genuine poetry, so that the public should suddenly exclaim, "What is this darkness?—and where is the light?—what intensely atrocious trash do we read?—and where is the most unlike thing to this; for our souls are confounded and athirst!"

Accordingly, with a magnanimity only to be classified with that of the devout martyrs, and of the Roman heroes who devoted themselves for the good of their country, this great Virtue has devoted itself—not to an honourable fate, but, more than that, to the utmost disgrace for the good of his literature! Knowing well what he was about, and fully prepared for all the odium and contempt that such a proceeding must reasonably be expected to entail, he launched upon the public, in this long poem of “Woman” a cargo of such unquestionable nonsense, such common-place vapidities of adulation, such high pretensions of imbecility, such ungrammatical flourishes and touches of the bathetic, and such a prolonged droning sing-song, uninspired even by the abortive life of one vigorous absurdity,—a production, in fine, which must be pronounced, in its parts, and as a whole, to be without parallel throughout the entire range of modern literature.

But the result has been quite as wonderful as the poem. Mr. Montgomery must console his bosom by the proud consciousness of having meant to act a noble part. With much regret we have to record the total failure of his esoteric scheme. We have described what he intended, and we have honestly, and pretty fully, expressed our opinion of how he carried out his design in the poem of “Woman.” But it was misunderstood. For the public (or at least an immense number of readers) not perceiving his drift, and not feeling the force of contrast, as the strategical martyr had intended, actually received the thing in sober earnest—as a poem! Its elaborate stupidity and matchless nonsense were all thrown away! The effort to exhaust with a mixture of folly and emptiness was defeated. The labour to disgust had been in vain—and Robert Montgomery, with “Woman” under his arm, was admitted into the public temple of the Muses, and again crowned as ‘a Poet!’

But not alone did the greatly humorous, though defeated Strategist enter this public Temple. Behind him came a crowd shouting his praises, and around him was a crowd, shouting in praise of his poetry; and in front of him was a crowd who bore placards, showing that his poems had gone through more than four or five editions for every one edition of the works of such fellows as Wordsworth, or Coleridge, or Tennyson. But

among this latter crowd there also appeared Mr. Punch! This well-known personage had a very large mirror under his short cloak. Courteously pointing his toe, as he approached the sacred Penman, he eloquently expressed his admiration of the man, who, after waving his white cambric handkerchief from a pulpit till the tears ran in rivulets all round, should yet have discovered another equally successful trick of oratory under circumstances where it was impossible to display the ring upon his little finger. Mr. Punch then coughed slightly—gave his mirror a rounding polish with the corner of his cloak, and addressing the crowds as the Public, he turned the mirror towards them, and politely requested to be informed what peculiar impression upon their thoughts they derived from the intelligent object they contemplated therein?

THOMAS CARLYLE.

“ Always there stood before him, night and day,
Of wayward vary-colored circumstance
The imperishable presences serene,
Colossal, without form, or sense, or sound ;
Dim shadows but unwaning presences
Four-faced to four corners of the sky :
And yet again, three shadows, fronting one,
One forward, one respectant, three but one ;
And yet again, again and evermore,
For the two first were not, but only seemed,
One shadow in the midst of a great light,
One reflex from eternity on time,
One mighty countenance of perfect calm,
Awful with most invariable eyes.”

TENNYSON. *The Mystic.*

“ Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk. There is not a piece of science, but its flank may be turned to-morrow, there is not any literary reputation, nor the so-called eternal names of fame, that may not be revised and condemned. * * * * *

He claps wings to the sides of all the solid old lumber of the world.”

EMERSON. *Essay on circles.*

ACCORDING to the view of the *microcosmus*, what is said of the world itself, may be said of every individual in it ; and what is said of the individual, may be predicated of the world. Now the individual mind has been compared to a prisoner in a dark room, or in a room which would be dark but for the windows of the same, meaning the senses, in a figure ; nothing being in the mind without the mediation of the senses, as Locke held,—“ except,” as Leibnitz acutely added in modification, “ the mind itself.” Thus is it with the individual, and thus with the general humanity. Were it not for the Something from without, and the Something within, which are both Revelations, we should sit on the floor of our dark dungeon, between its close stifling walls, gnawing vainly with the teeth of the mind, at the chains we wear. But conclusions which genius has leapt successfully, and science proved, have come to aid us. It is well to talk of the progress of the public mind. The public mind,—that is, the average intelligence of the many,—never does make progress, except by imbibing great principles from great men, which, after long and frequent reiteration, become part of the moral sense of a people. The educators are the

true and only movers. Progress implies the most active of energies, such as genius is, such as science is; and general progress implies, and indeed essentially consists of, individual progresses, men of genius, and other good teachers, working. A Ulysses must pass with the first goat,—call him Nobody, or by his right name. And to return to our first figure,—what the senses are to the individual mind, men of genius are to the general mind. Scantly assigned by Providence for necessary ends, one original thinker strikes a window out here, and another there; wielding the mallet sharply, and leaving it to others to fashion grooves and frames, and complete advantage into convenience.

That Mr. Carlyle is one of the men of genius thus referred to, and that he has knocked out his window from the blind wall of his century, we may add without any fear of contradiction. We may say, too, that it is a window to the east; and that some men complain of a certain bleakness in the wind which enters at it, when they should rather congratulate themselves and him on the aspect of the new sun beheld through it, the orient hope of which he has so discovered to their eyes. And let us take occasion to observe here, and to bear in memory through every subsequent remark we may be called upon to make, that it has not been his object to discover to us any specific prospect—not the mountain to the right, nor the oak-wood to the left, nor the river which runs down between,—but the sun, which renders all these visible.

When “the most thinking people” had, at the sound of all sorts of steam-engines, sufficiently worshipped that idol of utilitarianism which Jeremy Bentham, the king, had set up, and which Thomas Carlyle, the transcendentalist, and many others, who never read a page of Bentham’s works, have resolved to narrow to their own misconceptions of this philosopher,—the voice of a prophet was heard praying three times a day, with magnanimous reiteration, towards Jerusalem,—towards old Jerusalem, be it observed; and also towards the place of sun-rising for ultimate generations. And the voice spoke a strange language,—nearly as strange as Bentham’s own, and as susceptible of translation into English. Not English by any means, the critics said it spoke; nor even German, nor Greek; although partaking considerably more of the two last than of English;

but more of Saxon than either, we humbly beg to add. Yet if the grammarians and public teachers could not measure it out to pass as classic English, after the measure of Swift or Addison, or even of Bacon and Milton,—if new words sprang gauntly in it from savage derivatives, and rushed together in outlandish combinations,—if the collocation was distortion, wandering wildly up and down,—if the comments were everywhere in a heap, like the “pots and pans” of Bassano, classic or not, English or not; it was certainly a true language—a language “μερόπων ἀνθρώπων;” the significant articulation of a living soul: God’s breath was in the vowels of it. And the clashing of these harsh compounds at last drew the bees into assembly, each murmuring his honey-dream. And the hearers who stood longest to listen, became sensible of a still grave music issuing like smoke from the clefts of the rock. If it was not “style” and “classicism,” it was something better; it was soul-language. There was a divinity at the shaping of these rough-hewn periods.

We dwell the longer upon the construction of Mr. Carlyle’s sentences, because of him it is pre-eminently true, that the speech is the man. All powerful writers will leave, more or less, the pressure of their individuality on the medium of their communication with the public. Even the idiomatic writers, who trust their thoughts to a customary or conventional phraseology, and thus attain to a recognized level perfection in the medium, at the expense of being less instantly incisive and expressive (according to an obvious social analogy) have each an individual aspect. But the individuality of this writer is strongly pronounced. It is graven—like the Queen’s arrow on the poker and tongs of her national prisons—upon the meanest word of his utterance. He uses no moulds in his modelling, as you may see by the impression of his thumb-nail upon the clay. He throws his truth with so much vehemence, that the print of the palm of his hand is left on it. Let no man scoff at the language of Carlyle—for if it forms part of his idiosyncrasy, his idiosyncrasy forms part of his truth;—and let no man say that we recommend Carlylisms—for it is obvious, from our very argument, that, in the mouth of an imitator, they would unlearn their uses, and be conventional as Addison, or a mere chaos of capitals, and compounds, and *broken* language

We have named Carlyle in connection with Bentham, and we believe that you will find in "your philosophy," no better antithesis for one, than is the other. There is as much resemblance between them as is necessary for antithetic unlikeness. Each headed a great movement among thinking men; and each made a language for himself to speak with; and neither of them originated what they taught. Bentham's work was done by systematizing; Carlyle's, by reviving and reiterating. And as from the beginning of the world, the two great principles of matter and spirit have combated,—whether in man's personality, between the flesh and the soul; or in his speculativeness, between the practical and the ideal; or in his mental expression, between science and poetry,—Bentham and Carlyle assumed to lead the double van on opposite sides. Bentham gave an impulse to the material energies of his age, of the stuff of which he was himself made,—while Carlyle threw himself before the crushing chariots, not in sacrifice, but deprecation; "Go aside—*there is a spirit even in the wheels!*" In brief, and to take up that classification of virtues made by Proclus and the later Platonists,—Bentham headed such as were πολιτικάί, Carlyle exalts that which is τελεστική, venerant and religious virtue.

Every reader may not be acquainted, as every thinker should, with the Essays of R. W. Emerson, of Concord, Massachusetts. He is a follower of Mr. Carlyle, and in the true spirit; that is, no imitator, but a worker out of his own thoughts. To one of the English editions of this volume, Mr. Carlyle has written a short Preface, in which the following gaunt and ghastly, grotesque and graphic passage occurs, and which, moreover, is characteristic and to our immediate point.

"In a word, while so many Benthamisms, Socialisms, Fourierisms, *professing* to have no soul, go staggering and lowing like monstrous moon-calves, the product of a heavy-laden moon-struck age; and in this same baleful 'twelfth hour of the night' even galvanic Puseyisms, as we say, are visible, and dancings of the sheeted dead,—shall not any voice of a living man be welcome to us, even because it is alive?"

That the disciples of Bentham, and Robert Owen and Fourier, should be accused of professing to have no soul, because their main object has been to ameliorate the bodily condition of mankind; or that an indifference to poetry and the fine arts, except as light amusements, to be taken alternately with gymnastics and foot-ball.

should be construed into a denial of the existence of such things, we do not consider fair dealing. True, they all think of first providing for the body; and, looking around at the enormous amount of human suffering from physical causes, it is no great wonder that they chiefly devote their efforts to that amelioration. A man who is starving, is not in a fit state for poetry, nor even for prayer. Neither is a man fit for prayer, who is diseased, or ragged, or unclean—except the *one* prayer for that very amelioration which the abused philosophers of the body seek to obtain for him. With respect, however, to the disciples of Bentham, Owen, and Fourier, it is no wonder that he should be at utter variance. No great amount of love “is lost between them.” Not that Carlyle reads or knows much of their systems; and not that they read or know anything of his writings. In these natural antipathies all philosophers are in an equal state of unreasonableness. Or shall we rather call it wisdom, to follow the strong instincts of nature, without any prevaricating reasonings upon the in-felt fact. Carlyle could make little good out of their systems, if he read them; and they could make nothing at all of his writings. The opposite parties might force themselves to meet gravely, with hard lines of the efforts of understanding in their faces, and all manner of professions of dispassionate investigation and mutual love of truth—and they would clash foreheads at the first step, and part in fury! “The Body is the first thing to be helped!” cry the Benthamites, Owenites, Fourierites,—loudly echoed by Lord Ellenborough and the Bishop of London—“Get more Soul!” cries Carlyle, “and help yourselves!”

But the wants of the body will win the day—the movements of the present age show that plainly. The immortal soul can well afford to wait till its case is repaired. The death-groans of humanity must first be humanely silenced. More Soul, do we crave for the world? The world has long had a sphere full of unused Soul in it, before Christ, and since. If Plato, and Socrates, and Michael Angelo and Raphael, and Shakspeare and Milton, and Handel and Haydn, and all the great poets, philosophers, and music-magicians, that have left their Souls among us, have still rendered us no protection against starvation, or the disease and damage of the senses and brain by reason of want of

food, in God's name let us now think a little of the Body—the mortal case and medium of his Image. What should we think of a philosopher who went to one of our manufacturing towns where the operatives work from sixteen to eighteen hours a-day, and are nevertheless badly clothed, dirty, and without sufficient food,—and to whom the philosopher, as a remedial measure, suggested that they should get more soul. Many at this hour are slowly, or rapidly, dying from want. Can we tell them to think of their souls? No—give the fire some more fuel, and *then* expect more light, and the warmth of an aspiring flame. That these two extremes of body and soul philosophy, may, as Emerson declares, involve one and the same principle, viz., the welfare and progress of mankind, may be true; but at present the poor principle is “between two stools”—or between the horns of a dilemma not inaptly represented by Mr. Carlyle's misapplied figure of the staggering moon-calf.

We have observed that Carlyle is not an originator; and although he is a man of genius and original mind, and although he has knocked out his window in the wall of his century—and we know it,—we must repeat that, in a strict sense, he is not an originator. Perhaps our figure of the window might have been more correctly stated as the re-opening of an old window, long bricked up or encrusted over,—and probably this man of a strong mallet, and sufficient right hand, thought the recovery of the old window, a better and more glorious achievement, than the making of many new windows. His office certainly is not to “exchange new lamps for old ones.” His quality of a “gold-reviver” is the nearest to a novel acquirement. He tells us what we knew, but had forgotten, or refused to remember; and his reiterations startle and astonish us like informations. We “have souls,” he tells us. Who doubted it in the nineteenth century; yet who thought of it in the roar of the steam-engine? He tells us that work is every man's duty. Who doubted *that* among the factory masters?—or among the charity children, when spelling from the catechism of the national church, that they will “do their duty in the state of life to which it shall please God to call them?” Yet how deep and like a new sound, do the words “soul,” “work,” “duty,” strike down upon the flashing anvils,

of the age, till the whole age vibrates ! And again he tells us, "Have faith." Why, did we not know that we must have "faith ?" Is there a religious teacher in the land who does not repeat from God's revelation, year by year, day by day—Have faith ? or is there a quack in the land who does not call to his assistance the energy of "faith ?" And again—"Truth is a good thing." Is *that* new ? Is it not written in the theories of the moralist, and of the child ?—yes, and in the moral code of Parliament men, and other honourable gentlemen, side by side with bribery and corruption, and the "melancholy necessity" of the duellist's pistol and twelve paces ? Yet we thrill at the words, as if some new thunder of divine instruction ruffled the starry air, —as if an angel's foot sounded down it, step by step, coming with a message.

Thus it is obvious that Mr. Carlyle is not an originator, but a renewer, although his medium is highly original ; and it remains to us to recognise that he is none the less important teacher on that account, and that there was none the less necessity for his teaching. "The great fire-heart," as he calls it, of human nature may burn too long without stirring ; burn inwardly, cake outwardly, and sink deeply into its own ashes : and to emancipate the flame clearly and brightly, it is necessary to stir it up strongly from the lowest bar. To do this, by whatever form of creation and illustration, is the aim and end of all poetry of a high order,—this,—to resume human nature from its beginning, and return to first principles of thought and first elements of feeling ; this,—to dissolve from eye and ear the film of habit and convention, and open a free passage for beauty and truth, to gush in upon unencrusted perceptive faculties : for poetry like religion should make a man a child again in purity and unadulterated perceptivity.

No poet yearns more earnestly to make the inner life shine out, than does Carlyle. No poet regrets more sorrowfully, with a look across the crowded and crushing intellects of the world,—that the dust rising up from men's energies, should have blinded them to the brightness of their instincts,—and that understanding (according to the German view) should take precedence of a yet more spiritualized faculty. He is reproached with not being practical. "Mr. Carlyle," they say, "is not practical." But he is practical for many intents of the

inner life, and teaches well the Doing of Being. "What would he make of us?" say the complainers. "He reproaches us with the necessities of the age, he taunts us with the very progress of time, his requirements are so impossible that they make us despair of the republic." And this is true. If we were to give him a sceptre, and cry "Rule over us," nothing could exceed the dumb, motionless, confounded figure he would stand: his first words on recovering himself, would be, "Ye have souls! work—believe." He would not know what else to think, or say for us, and not at all what to do with us. He would pluck, absently, at the sceptre, for the wool of the fillet to which his hands were accustomed; for he is no king, except in his own peculiar sense of a prophet and priest-king,—and a vague prophet, be it understood. His recurrence to first principles and elements of action, is in fact, so constant and passionate, that his attention is not free for the development of actions. The hand is the gnomon by which he judges of the soul; and little cares he for the hand otherwise than as a spirit-index. He will not wash your hands for you, be sure, however he may moralise on their blackness. Whether he writes history, or philosophy, or criticism, his perpetual appeal is to those common elements of humanity which it is his object to cast into relief and light. His work on the French Revolution is a great poem with this same object;—a return upon the life of humanity, and an eliciting of the pure material and initial element of life, out of the fire and torment of it. The work has fitly been called graphical and picturesque; but it is so *by force of being* philosophical and poetical. For instance, where the writer says that "Marat was in a cradle like the rest of us," it is no touch of rhetoric, though it may seem so, but a resumption of the philosophy of the whole work. Life suggests to him the cradle, the grave, and eternity, with scarce a step between. In that brief interval he sometimes exhorts that you should work; and sometimes it would appear as if he exhorted you not to work at all, but to sit still and think. He is dazzled by the continual contemplation of a soul beating its tiny wings amidst the pale vapours of Infinity. Why, such a man (not speaking it irreverently) is not fit to live. He is only fit to be where his soul most aims at. He sinks our corporal condition, with all its

wants, and says, "Be a man!" A dead-man with a promoted spirit seems our only chance in this philosophy.

Carlyle has a great power of re-production, and can bring back his man from the grave of years, not like a ghost, but with all his vital flesh as well as his thoughts about him. The reproduced man thinks, feels, and acts like himself at his most characteristic climax—and the next instant the Magician pitches him into Eternity, saying, "It all comes to that." But his power over the man, while he lasts, is entire, and the individual is almost always dealt with as in time-present. His scenes of by-gone years, are all acted now, before your eyes. By contrast Carlyle often displays truth; from the assimilations in the world, he wrings the product of the differences; and by that masterly method of individualising persons, which is remarkable in his historical writing, the reader sometimes attains what Carlyle himself seems to abhor, viz., a broad generalization of principles. His great forte and chief practice is individualization. And when he casts his living heart into an old monk's diary, and, with the full warm gradual throbs of genius and power, throws out the cowled head into a glory: the reason is not, as some disquieted readers have hinted, that Mr. Carlyle regrets the cloistral ages and defunct superstitions,—the reason is not, that Mr. Carlyle is *too* poetical to be philosophical, but that he is *so* poetical as to be philosophical in essence when treating of things. The reason is, that Mr. Carlyle recognizes, in a manner that no mere historian ever does, but as the true poet always will do,—the same human nature through every cycle of individual and social existence. He is a poet also, by his insight into the activity of moral causes working through the intellectual agencies of the mind. He is also a poet in the mode. He conducts his argument with no philosophical arrangements and marshalling of "for and against;" his paragraphs come and go as they please. He proceeds, like a poet, rather by analogy and subtle association than by uses of logic. His illustrations not only illustrate, but bear a part in the reasoning;—the images standing out, like grand and beautiful caryatides, to sustain the heights of the argument. Of his language we have spoken. Somewhat too slow, broken up, and involved for eloquence, and too indi-

vidual to be classical, it is yet the language of a gifted painter and poet, the colour of whose soul eats itself into the words. And magnificent are the splendours they display, even as the glooms. Equally apt are they for the sad liveries of pain and distress, and certainly for the rich motleys of the humorous grotesque. His pictures and conjurings-up of this latter kind—chiefly from his original faculty, and method of producing the thing alive and before you, but also by contrast with his usual thoughtful, ardent, and exacting style—are inexpressibly ludicrous. His Latin epitaph on Count Zähdarm, in “Sartor Resartus,” and his account of the courtier whose lower habiliments were stuffed with bran, to look broad and fashionable, but who unfortunately sat down upon a nail, are exquisite. These things are often additionally ludicrous from his giving the actors a dry, historical shape, while the scene itself is utterly absurd and extravagant, but amidst which the narrator seldom appears to move a muscle of his face. It is by reason of this humorous dryness that we sometimes do not know if he would really have us laugh at the thing.

Moreover, it must be stated, that the Prophet of the Circle hath displayed a cloven tongue!—and peradventure the sincerity of his mode of expression in several works may at times have been questionable. The most orthodox dogmatists have often applauded his sayings about a Church, when it has been plain to the initiated readers of his books that he meant no such temple as that, but some untithed field, with a soul in it. In like manner, in his remarks on tolerance in his “Hero-worship,” he seems to guard himself strongly against imputations of latitudinarianism; whereby the highly orthodox commend him as very proper, and the latitudinarians laugh in their sleeves—he does it so well. It is the same in politics. Radicalism is scoffed at; and the next page lets loose a sweeping radical principle, involving perhaps no small destructiveness for its attainment. On the other side, Tories are gratified by his declarations of reverence for old things, though they may be placed, in order to be the better seen, upon the top of Vesuvius; and the more assimilative and shapely Conservative smiles to hear him speak aloud for the conservation of all things which are good and excellent. The book on “Past and Present,” how-

ever, settles most of these doubts. It is all over with him among the high church party; and he laughs as he thinks. But have any of the other parties got him? Not so: he was born to be an independent Thinker; it is his true mission; it is the best thing he can do, and we have no doubt but it is just the thing he *will* do.

We think "Sartor Resartus" the finest of Mr. Carlyle's works in conception, and as a whole. In execution he is always great; and for graphic vigour and quantity of suggestive thought, matchless: but the idea, in this book, of uncovering the world—taking off all the *clothes*—the cloaks and outsides—is admirable. His finest work, as matter of political philosophy, is undoubtedly his "Past and Present." In this work he is no longer the philosopher of the circle. He allows the world a chance.

The incentive to progression in the great family of mankind, is usually considered to be the desire for happiness, or the prospect of bettering our condition by struggling onward to a given point: but the necessity of progression, as well as the incentive, are perhaps equally attributable to another cause. It may be that Dissatisfaction is the great mover; and that this feeling is implanted as a restless agent to act for ever upon us, so as to urge us onward for ever in our ascending cycles of being. This we should conceive to be Mr. Carlyle's impression. He does not say so, we believe; nor perhaps does he decidedly think so; nevertheless we should say the Philosophy of Dissatisfaction formed a principal element in his many-sided unsystematic view of the struggles of mortality.

The book entitled "Chartism" was a recognition of this principle of dissatisfaction, as manifested by the violent mental and physical forces of a number of enraged sufferers. But we pass through the book as through a journey of many ways and many objects, brilliantly illuminated and pictured in every direction, but without arriving at any clear conclusion, and without gathering any fresh information on the main subject, during the progress. By his not very clear argument about "might" and "right," he has enabled any despot to show some sort of reasoning for any violent act.

His grand remedial proposals for all the evils of the country, by "Universal Education" and "*General Emi-*

gration," are rather an evasion of Chartism and its causes; for the Chartists say, "We have enough education to see the injustice of people being starved in a land of plenty; and as for emigration, we do not choose to go. Go yourselves."

"Past and Present" evidences a perception of greater wants than these Education and Emigration plans.

"True, all turns on your Ready Reckoner being moderately correct,—being *not* insupportably incorrect! A Ready Reckoner which has led to distinct entries in your Ledger such as these:—'*Creditor*, to English people, by fifteen hundred years of good labour; and *Debtor* in lodging in enchanted Poor-Law Bastilles: *Creditor* by conquering the largest Empire the Sun ever saw; and *Debtor* to Donthingism and 'Impossible,' written on all the departments of the government thereof: *Creditor* by mountains of gold ingots earned; and *Debtor* to the Bread purchasable by them' *such* Ready Reckoner, methinks, is beginning to be suspect; nay, is ceasing, and has ceased, to be suspect! Such Ready-Reckoner is a Solecism in Eastcheap; and must, whatever be the press of business, and will and shall be rectified a little! Business can go on no longer with *it*."—*Past and Present*. p. 220.

The "History of the French Revolution," is considered by most people to be Mr. Carlyle's greatest work; not as a history, we presume, nor because it is in three volumes, but chiefly because it is thought to contain a more abundant and varied display of his powers than any of his other works. We can offer no remarks about it so good as those we shall extract from an article written by Joseph Mazzini,* which we consider to be one of the most profound, masterly, and earnest-minded critical essays that was ever written. We should also add, that it is full of that admiration and respect which are due to a writer of Mr. Carlyle's genius and character.

"By that Revolution the spirit of emancipation became incarnate in a people, and gave battle; and the battle was long, bloody, destructive, full of great and cruel things, of Titan-like phrenzies and achievements. * * * * Have extinct generations nothing more to yield us than an emotion of pity? * * * * The historian has a noble and great mission; but it is not by making us weep over all that falls; it is not by placing before us, fragment by fragment, detail by detail, the mere material fact, the succession of crises by which this world of the dead, with their immediate effects, have passed away;—above all, it is not by dragging forth, at every instant, from the midst of this collective and complex world, the single wretched and feeble individual, and setting him in presence of the profound 'mystery of time,' before 'unfathomable darkness,' to terrify him with the enigma of existence—it is not so that this mission can be fulfilled. * * * * Before our eyes, as before his, in the midst of a kind of phantasmagorical vortex, capable of giving the strongest head a dizziness, pass in speedy flight the defunct heroes of the poem. What are they going to do? We know not: the poet explains them not, but he laments over them all, whoever they may be. What have they done? Where are they going? We know not, but whatever they may have done, time has now devoured them, and onward they pass over the slippery gore one after another, rolling

* Monthly Chronicle, No. XXIII., January 1840.

into night, the great night of Goëthe, the bottomless and nameless abyss; and the voice of the poet is heard crying to the loiterers, 'Rest not—continue not—forward to thy doom!' When all are gone, when escaped, as from the nightmare; out of the midst of the turmoil, you look around to catch some trace of their passage, to see if they have left aught behind them that can furnish the solution of the enigma,—you have only a vacuum. Three words alone remain as the summary of their history—the Bastille—the Constitution—the Guillotine. The Constitution, the object of every effort, is placed between a prison and a scaffold. * * * * And is this all? There is another thing. Twenty-nine millions of beings rose not as one man, and the half of the population of Europe shook not at their appeal, for a word, a shadow, and empty formula. * * * * He has done no more than give us *tab'caux*, wonderful in execution, but nothing in conception, without connection, without a bearing. His book is the French Revolution *illustrated*—illustrated by the hand of a master, we know, but one from whom we expected a different labour. * * * * The eternal *cursus et recursus* inexorably devours ideas, creeds, daring, and devotedness. The Infinite takes, to him, the form of Nihilation. It has a glance of pity for every act of enthusiasm, a smile, stamped with scepticism, for every act of great devotedness to ideas. Generalities are odious to it; detail is its favourite occupation, and it there amuses itself as if seeking to lay at rest its inconsolable cares."

We add the following, as being equally applicable to certain peculiarities in other works of Mr. Carlyle.

"He has lost the sentiment of human grandeur; he has found himself placed between the infinite and the individual, catching at every instant from this contrast, a kind of terror of the former, and of pity, nothing more than pity, for the latter. So, having no higher value to give to the idea, he has been driven, in order not to exhaust himself at the very outset, to give so much the more to the impression: he becomes passive. Everything of a nature to strike vividly on the senses has been seized by him, and he has handed down the image to his readers. * * * *

"It is to Goëthe, too much revered by Mr. Carlyle, that we owe this tinge of irony which in this book often supervenes * * * those traits of mockery * * * above all, that disposition to crush man by contrasting him with the Infinite. As if it were not precisely from the consciousness of this Infinite environing him, and that yet prevents him not from *acting*, that man is great;—as if the eternity that is before us, after us, and around us, were not also within us."—MAZZINI.

This unfair method of dealing with humanity, this continual disposition to place man at a disadvantage of the most extreme kind, *viz.*, by comparison with space and time, and the miraculous round of things, constitutes a prominent feature in the philosophy of dissatisfaction. It is always sure of its blow, and its humiliating superiority; for who can stand before it? We might quote to Mr. Carlyle the words addressed to Mephistopheles—"Seems nothing ever right to you on earth?" One cannot imagine anything done by human hands which would be likely to give Mr. Carlyle much satisfaction. He would be pretty sure to say, at best, "Work on, and we shall see what else will come of it!" Or, more probably, to quote again from 'Faust,' he would remind us that "Man must err, till he has

ceased to struggle." Hence he would have us sit quietly and be silent. He applauds inactivity and silence; but he also applauds work: he says man must work, and exhorts every one to do his utmost. These contradictions, however, have a central meaning, which we shall attempt to explain. The dissatisfaction, the unhopfulness, and the melancholy that pervades his works are attributable to the same causes.

For the practical dissatisfaction exhibited in Mr. Carlyle's works, we would offer the following elucidation. We think that he so continually negatives the value of work, denies the use and good of doing things, and smiles bitterly or laughs outright at human endeavour, because he considers that so long as the Competitive system—the much applauded "fair competition"—be the rule of social working life, instead of Co-operation, there can be made no actual step in advance to a better condition of things. So long as one class, whether in trade, politics, art, or literature, is always striving to oppose, pull back, counteract, or plunder the other, no permanent good can supervene. The greatest remedial measure which is sure to let in an overflowing stream of good, he laughs at,—because, after all the long labours of the contest for it, he sees in imagination a number of side-trenches cut to let it off before it reaches the assumed destination, or means taken to let it off after its arrival, by other channels. By the terms "hero" and "heroic," he means true wisdom and moral strength; and the only hope he sees for this world, is that one man should rule over each country, eminent for his heroic worth, because chosen by a people who have at length become themselves not un-heroic, and therefore capable of knowing true greatness, and of choosing their greatest man.

So much for his practical and political dissatisfaction. For his contradictory tone concerning all work, as unavailing and yet a necessity, let him answer for himself:

"Thus, like a God-created, fire-breathing, spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished earth; then plunge again into the Inane. Earth's mountains are levelled, and her seas filled up, in our passage: can the earth, which is but dead and a vision, resist spirits which have reality and are alive? On the hardest adamant, some foot-print of us is stamped in; the last Rear of the host will read traces of the earliest Van. But whence? O, heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God to God.

'We are such stuff

*As dreams are made of, and our little Life
Is rounded with a sleep.'*"

A familiar illustration sometimes helps a philosophical difficulty. The following story, which is highly characteristic of the parties, and is nevertheless of a kind that may be told without violating the trustfulness of private intercourse, will very well answer our present purpose. Leigh Hunt and Carlyle were once present among a small party of equally well-known men. It chanced that the conversation rested with these two—both first-rate talkers, and the others sat well pleased to listen. Leigh Hunt had said something about the Islands of the Blest, or El Dorado, or the Millennium, and was flowing on in his bright and hopeful way, when Carlyle dropt some heavy tree-trunk across Hunt's pleasant stream, and banked it up with philosophical doubts and objections at every interval of the speaker's joyous progress. But the unmitigated Hunt never ceased his overflowing anticipations, nor the saturnine Carlyle his infinite demurs to those finite flourishings. The listeners laughed and applauded by turns; and had now fairly pitted them against each other, as the philosopher of Hopefulness and of the Unhopeful. The contest continued with all that ready wit and philosophy, that mixture of pleasantry and profundity, that extensive knowledge of books and character, with their ready application in argument or illustration, and that perfect ease and good nature, which distinguish each of these men. The opponents were so well matched that it was quite clear the contest would never come to an end. But the night was far advanced, and the party broke up. They all sallied forth; and leaving the close room, the candles and the arguments behind them, suddenly found themselves in presence of a most brilliant star-light night. They all looked up. "Now," thought Hunt, "Carlyle's done for!—he can have no answer to that!" "There!" shouted Hunt, "look up there! look at that glorious harmony, that sings with infinite voices an eternal song of hope in the soul of man." Carlyle looked up. They all remained silent to hear what he would say. They began to think he was silenced at last—he was a mortal man. But out of that silence came a few low-toned words, in a broad Scotch accent. And who, on earth, could have anticipated what the voice said? "Eh! it's a *sad* sight!"—Hunt sat down on a stone step. They all laughed—then looked very thoughtful. Had the finite measured itself with infini-

ty, instead of surrendering itself up to the influence? Again they laughed—then bade each other good night, and betook themselves homeward with slow and serious pace. There might be some reason for sadness, too. That brilliant firmament probably contained infinite worlds, each full of struggling and suffering beings—of beings who had to die—for life in the stars implies that those bright worlds should also be full of graves; but all that life, like ours, knowing not whence it came, nor whither it goeth, and the brilliant Universe in its great Movement having, perhaps, no more certain knowledge of itself, nor of its ultimate destination, than hath one of the suffering specks that compose this small spot we inherit.

HENRY TAYLOR

AND

THE AUTHOR OF "FESTUS."

"Hand in hand at wisdom's shrine,
Beauty with Truth I strive to join,
And grave Assent with glad Applause ;
To paint the story of the soul,
And Plato's vision to controul
By Verulamian laws !"—*AKENSIDE.*

"But as we, in our isle imprisoned,
Where cattle only, and divers dogs are bred,
The precious unicorns, strange monsters call,—
So thought he sweets strange, that had none at all."
DONNE. Elegy 4.

"Great thoughts, like great deeds, need
No trumpet. * * * * *
But set thyself about it, as the sea
About earth, lashing at it day and night ;
And leave the stamp of thine own soul in it,
As thorough as the fossil flower in clay."
Additional Scene to "Festus."

"Yea, copyists shall die, spark out and out.
Minds which Combine and Make, alone can tell
The bearings and the workings of all things
In and upon each other."—*Ibid.*

THE unrepressed vigour of imagination,—and the graceful display of philosophical thought ; the splendour of great and original imagery,—and the level dignity of the operations of the understanding ; the passion of poetry,—and the sound sense of poetry ; are proposed to be discussed in this essay. The calm philosophy of poetry, in its addresses to the understanding and the domestic affections, now holds the ascendancy ; but as the fresh and energetic spirit of the present age advances, a contest is certain to take place in the fields of Literature on the above questions. The sooner, therefore, the battle is fought out, the better ; and to this end, the poetical antagonisms shall at once be brought into collision. Several of the parties being personal friends, they will not be so much surprised at this summary cry "to arms," as that very large portion of

the public who fancy that the periods of poetry are all over with us in England.

A peculiar principle, and a peculiar style, are the first things to be considered in this business. If the absence of enthusiasm, or the total subjugation of it by the intellect; and if the absence of a power to call up imagery, or the levelling down of imagery to a barren regularity, be now considered as the true principle and style for the greatest poetry, then all our great poets of by-gone ages, have written in error, and must no longer be accounted great, except in the light of barbarians, even as Pope and Dr. Johnson regarded the men of the Elizabethan age. But this will never be admitted again, for the public mind has outgrown all such teaching. The attempt, therefore, seems to be to bring back the same impression or opinion, without verbally stating it,—and, by making an exception in favour of Shakspeare, to merge all the glories of his poetical contemporaries in a generalized idea of extravagance and disorder.

Most readers will recollect that Wordsworth has prefixed to his beautiful poem, “To the Daisy,” some lines from Withers, which either originated or encouraged in him the principle by which the descriptive part of his poetry is so peculiarly influenced:—

“That from every thing I saw
I could some instruction draw,
And raise pleasure to the height,
Through the meanest object’s sight,” &c.—WITHERS.

The disposition to misuse an extreme principle has for some time been perceptible. The great poet Wordsworth has said how much to his mind was “the meanest flower that blows.” No doubt but it was much *to him*; and no doubt there is nothing mean, essentially, in nature. But when a number of other poets say—“Well, and the meanest flower is just as much *to us*!”—we cannot believe that they are sincere, for the original impression is not theirs, and no one, by mere imitation, can have “thoughts that lie too deep for tears.” The universal application of a sentiment cannot imply a universal sensibility. (It should here be understood that we are not at present alluding to either of the gentlemen at the head of this paper, but speaking in general terms.) But out of this same “following” has been derived a notion that the more mean and insignificant a subject, or object, is in itself, the more fit and worthy

is the opportunity for a poet to make it great by uplifting and surrounding it with his own personal feelings and thoughts. 'To all this we say—"Leave the great poet his originality." His best teachings should be received, but his experience should not be imitated or assumed. Nor will the principle bear it any further than he has carried it without manifest injury to our literature. With Burns the daisy was a "wee, modest, crimson-tippit flower;"—with Wordsworth it has "a function Apostolical." The small celandine, or common pilewort, Wordsworth calls a "Prophet of delight and mirth." That in his enlarged and peculiar sense of these things, the terms are admissible, we very well know; but we should not be prompt to respect any other poet who declared that to him the daisy was like any apostle, or that he could discover anything prophetic of mirth in the small celandine! It was so, to Wordsworth: it is not so to many of his followers.

The steady, classical, and perspicuous style of the accomplished author of "Philip van Artevelde" is much to be admired. He, and a few others, have rightly understood the true meaning of simplicity, as matter of style. The word, however, has become injurious by the notion that has been created from it, and very much by Mr. Taylor's assistance, that all splendour of imagery is mere redundancy; and this notion has hence become a sort of excuse for the pride of natural barrenness.

Now, for our own individual taste, however, we freely declare that we like something more "audible and full of vent," and are not without apprehension that an exclusive devotion to the idea of simplicity may gradually induce baldness into our poetical literature. There is coming among us a cant about simplicity, as though the means of greatness were the end. "Nothing (as an ingenious gentleman recently said in a monthly periodical) can be more simple than 'Give me a pot of beer!'"—yet nobody would pretend that this was grandeur." 'To say this would be like the assertion of Lord Peter, in excuse for feeding his poor brothers upon nothing but bread. "Bread (said Lord Peter) is the staff of life. Bread comprises within itself the essence of beef, and mutton, and veal, and partridge, and pheasant, and woodcock, and grouse, and quail, and plum-pudding, and custard." This will not do; the beauty

and the power of passion and imagination, simply *expressed*, is the great point to aim at; and yet by no means to the exclusion of such images and phrases as spontaneously arise out of those great elements, and are in such cases their most natural interpreters. For a demonstration of the above position, if not thought self-evident, we can only refer to the practice of the greatest epic, dramatic, and lyric poets.

"So then," it may be said, "you are for the choice of great subjects, and a great style; and not for the meanest things, and simplicity?" That would be the taunting form of the proposition, and would convey a false inference besides. Not in that mode are principles of Art to be discussed. We are for an unexclusive choice in good subjects, and we are for a suitable style to each. But we are anxious to see poets create and design subjects in which their own individuality shall be merged; and that it should be well understood that true simplicity does not refer to puerilities or a barren style, but primitive emotions, and a clear and concise form of expression.

The reader will perhaps recollect, or turn to, the remarks (p. 214) on Mr. Macaulay's position, that to write, or even to enjoy, poetry of the highest class, involves a certain degree of "unsoundness of mind." We hope it has there been shown how much the notion amounts to; and that no songs of "battle, murder, and sudden death," can be called the perfection of right reason, merely because the slayers are ancient Romans. Macaulay is a man of undoubtedly great and most sound understanding—but "how about these Lays?—for he cannot be sound and unsound?"

In Mr. Taylor's preface to "Philip van Artevelde," he propounds his philosophy of poetry with that clearness of expression and gentleman-like courtesy in differing, which are characteristic of him. Yet we think that besides certain indefensible opinions and assertions, he has not fully met the question. With his strictures on Lord Byron we agree in the main. Byron was certainly a better constructor, and a more practical and generally intelligible artist than Shelley, though his imagination was far inferior to that of Shelley. Still, it cannot be rightly inferred because Shelley's imagination carried him away, often into regions where his genius could neither act, nor whence it could return to

earth, but was lost in the bright Immensity, that therefore poets ought to make all imagination subservient to the reasoning faculty, and what is called "good sense," or that it should be reduced to the condition of a balanced level, and its natural images be shorn and shaven to baldness. "Suppose I were to say," says Dr. Burney, "Well—I have been to Italy—seen the Venus, the Apollo, and many fine things,—but, after all, give me a good, plain barber's block."

Mr. Henry Taylor would no doubt say that he did not mean this; but we fear his argument would amount to something like it, and at any rate is calculated to produce such an impression, and inculcate a hard dry taste in the public mind. Mr. Taylor argues for poets obtaining a fine balance of the faculties (devoutly to be desired, of course), and regards "good sense" as "one of the most *essential* constituents of genius"—which it undoubtedly is, philosophically understood; and undoubtedly is *not*, in the conventional meaning of the term, as he uses it. These arguments, therefore, must rather be regarded as pretexts for depressing the tone of all modern poetry, moderating passion at the very outset, and stunting the growth of imagination by never suffering it to rise beyond the calm level of reason and common sense.

There must be something peculiarly undramatic in the mind that could conceive and execute a dramatic subject in so lengthy a form as to comprise the same number of lines as six plays, each of the ordinary length. In this philosophical poem we may find a prolonged illustration of Mr. Taylor's principles of poetry and the drama. A dramatic poet, without passion;—what does that amount to? A romantic poet, without any romance in him;—what does that amount to? A contemplative poet, without a heaven of ideality above his head;—what does that amount to? A rhythmical writer, and teacher, who denies the distinct element of poetry *as* poetry.

Yet a distinct element it assuredly has. Poetry, though made up of other things, is yet as much an entire thing as any of the substantive faculties of the mind, each of which is made up of the other faculties. For there is no such thing as pure reason, pure imagination, pure judgment;—but each helps the other, and of necessity. Still, we admit a distinct faculty of each. In

like manner do we claim a distinct existence for poetry.

Should we think it fitting that our legislators delivered statesmanlike and eloquent orations in Parliament with a musical accompaniment; or our philosophers lectured in recitative? The arguments of Mr. Taylor lead us directly to the question of why he does not write in prose? Certainly "Philip van Artevelde" would have been as dramatic and romantic in prose as in its present form. Its rhythm appears unnecessary, and he evidently feels it. After writing a romance in about ten thousand lines of verse, which ought to have been three volumes of elegant prose, he then composes a Preface to justify the proceeding. He says, "My critical views have rather resulted from composition than directed it." Finding he could rise no higher, he strives to show that rising higher would argue a loss "of the equipoise of reason."

It may now be asked,—Are there any signs of imaginative vitality among living authors, independent of those old established reputations, the owners whereof are reposing upon their laurels?—are there any new men with whom abstract power and beauty are a passion, and who possess the requisite faculties for their development? Are there, also, any signs of efforts, on their part, to revive or create a taste in the public for the higher classes of composition? and if so, with what degree and prospect of success? These are surely very interesting questions—some of them easily answered, others open to considerable difficulties and incertitude.

Whatever may be the struggles—foolishly called *all-absorbing*—which are now transpiring in politics, in theology, and in the commercial world; and however convinced each of the different parties may be that nothing else can go right—nor that, indeed, any thing else can be properly attended to—till their particular cause is settled as they wish,—it is manifest that there is quite as great a struggle coming on in literature, and in that very department which is most neglected by the public—we mean in poetry. The public does not see this; and as poetry is at present so unpopular, the critics do not see the struggle; but let anybody look at the persevering announcements of new poems in advertisements, and read a few of the poems of some half-dozen of the best, and then the truth of our assertion

will become apparent. The energetic spirit at work in various minds, and with different kinds and degrees of power, but still at work, not only without the slightest outward encouragements, but with all manner of opposition in their path, and with the certain expenditure of time and worldly means upon their "losing game," must absolutely possess something genuine in its elements, and in its hopeful and indefatigable continuity.

Imaginative and impassioned poetry has not been so uncommon among us as may have been thought. Those whom "it concerned" in nearly every instance discovered it, and welcomed it. Besides those who are already recognized, there have been, and are, others. Several of these little known, or unknown, works we will mention. It is a service of abstract love; and we trust it will be received, not in a resentful, but a kindly spirit, by those who may now hear of them for the first time. One of the least known, published as long since as 1824, under the unpromising title of "Joseph and his Brethren," was full of the elements of true poetry,—in passion, imagination, and in thoughts resulting from the reason and the understanding. It also displayed great descriptive powers. The resemblance of the author's mind to that of P. J. Bailey, the author of "Festus," is extraordinary. As the writings of this latter poet are at present but little known (his work was only published four years since, and a true poet has little chance under ten or twelve), we ought perhaps to introduce him at once in an extract:—

"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most; feels the noblest; acts the best.
And he whose heart beats quickest lives the longest:
Lives in one hour more than in years do some
Whose fat blood sleeps as it slips along their veins.
Life is but a means unto an end; that end,
Beginning, mean and end to all things—God.
The dead have all the glory of the world."—*Festus*, p. 62-3.

We should at once decline to argue with anybody who denied the poetry in the above passage. The philosophy of the poem of "Festus" is to show the great ministry of evil as a purifier. But the spirit itself mourns, not knowing its purpose. In the following, the Spirit of Evil speaks:—

"The arrow knoweth not its end and aim.
And I keep rushing, ruining along,

Like a great river rich with dead men's souls.
 For if I knew I might rejoice ; and that
 To me by nature is forbidden. I know
 Nor joy nor sorrow ; but a changeless tone
 Of sadness, like the night-wind's, is the strain
 Of what I have of feeling."—*Ibid*, p. 26.

This poem abounds with equally fine passages, and in nearly every page. Such perfect instances of contrast are the minds of Mr. Henry Taylor, and of the author of "*Festus*," that you cannot open the works of either, scarcely at any one page, which does not furnish a striking illustration of the passion of true poetry on the one hand, and the philosophical sense, and statesman-like self-possession of verse which should have been prose, on the other.

Here is a passage from the "Additional Scene to *Festus*," on *love*, which Mr. Taylor will no doubt regard as the total loss of "the equipose of reason," as indeed it usually is, we suspect.

"*Festus*. It is therefore that I love thee ; for, that when
 The fiery perfection of the world,
 The sun, shall be a shadow, and burnt out,
 There is an impulse tow'ards eternity
 Raised by this moment's love."

Instead of entering into any useless arguments on this point, we will at once give a love-scene from Mr. Taylor's work.

Let us take an illustration of "reason" and "passion," as the two stand opposed in Mr. Taylor's mind. We will extract a portion of the scene in which Artevelde has, with much intreaty and many flattering protestations, won the consent of Elena to devote herself to him ;—

Artevelde. "Tell me, sweet Elena,
 May I not hope, or rather can I hope,
 That for such brief and bounded space of time
 As are my days on earth, you'll yield yourself
 To love me living, and to mourn me dead."

Elena is altogether a creature of impulse and emotion—an Italian, of great beauty and of high birth, but of wounded affection and blighted fame. She loves Artevelde passionately, and his "proposals" (the usual worldly term suits well here) affect her deeply. As he presses her to give him up her heart, she replies ;—

"I cannot—no—
 I cannot give you what you've had so long ;
 Nor need I tell you what you know so well.
 I must be gone."

and again;—

"No, let me go—I cannot tell—no—no—

I want to be alone—

Oh! Artevelde, for God's love let me go!"

She leaves him with these words. The sequel proves that her love was deep and intense. She lives with him till the battle in which he was killed. She finds his body among the slain, kneels by it, embraces it, is discovered in this state, and when a French knight attempts to defend her from the charge of having been the paramour of the dead hero, she starts to her feet with the words,—

"Thou liest, I was his paramour;"

thus glorying in her devotion. She revenges the insult offered to him, as he lies dead, by stabbing a man to the heart, and is herself killed in her resistance to a separation from his body. This closing scene is very ineffectively executed, and the situation being too strong for Mr. Taylor, he has painted it coarsely, and with an effect of bombast, the result of artificially striving to supply the want of passion; but it is detailed here to show that Elena *had* a passion for Artevelde.

How then, to revert to their previous life, did he, cool and self-possessed, comport himself, when she, agitated with conflicting emotions, left him with the words, "Oh, Artevelde, for God's love let me go!"

"Artevelde (after a pause). The night is far advanced upon the morrow,

And but for that conglomerated mass

Of cloud with ragged edges, like a mound

Or black pine-forest on a mountain's top,

Wherein the light lies ambushed, dawn were near;—

Yes, *I have wasted half a summer's night.*

Was it well spent! *Successfully it was.*

How little flattering is a woman's love!—

Worth to the heart, come how it may, a world;

Worth to men's measures of their own deserts,

If weighed in wisdom's balance, merely nothing."

So that the pure gift of feeling which is worth a world to man's *heart*, is worth nothing in comparison with a much wiser thing—his vain glory! Recovering himself, therefore, as quickly as he can, he calls one of his officers—enters upon business—and orders two men to be hanged!

Here then we find placed before us passion and reason; or, at least, Mr. Taylor's idea of passion and reason. The latter he exalts in his theory; the former he

condemns as selfish and as vanity. Which is here the more selfish? Passion gives all, even to life itself. Reason wins all, and sneers at it. In the world's estimation this self-possessed reason is of course the most "respectable;" but which stands purest in the eye of God?

Several poems of the higher class of imaginative composition have appeared during the last ten years. In allusion to the learned and versatile author of the "Judgment of the Flood," and the "Descent into Hell," we could hardly do better than quote a couplet from the American poet, Cornelius Matthews—

"Thy heart-gates, mighty, open either way,—
Come they to feast, or go they forth to pray."

The "Record of the Pyramids," by J. E. Reade, is another of those works in which the author has chosen a great subject, and had a high design in his mind. The execution in this case is unequal to the conception, owing to the preservation of a certain philosophic calm, under circumstances when nothing but passion could have carried through such stupendous actions as are described, or induced full faith in the reader. But the respect and admiration due to an author who has always manifested such high and pure aims in art, ought always to be gladly awarded.

While treating of works of design, we should not be deterred from submitting a few remarks concerning "Orion" (using the same privilege as Mr. Taylor and other authors, in their Introductions and Prefaces), but want of space warns us to pass on to the works of others, which it is our duty to discuss in preference.

"Vivia Perpetua," by Sarah Flower Adams, is an example of an exalted subject, worthily wrought out, clear in design, skilful in construction. The characters are well drawn. The style a true example of simplicity. The ideas are more characterized by sweetness and pure religious emotion than by abstract imagination, either of beauty or power. Yet the power and beauty of *impassioned reason* (we commend the expression to Mr. Taylor's especial attention) are never absent, being personified in the principal character. Some of the situations in which Vivia is placed, are highly dramatic. The following fine extract shows the noble Roman lady renouncing faith in the gods of her country.

TEMPLE OF JUPITER OLYMPUS.

VIVIA PERPETUA *at an altar burning before a statue of the god.*

VIVIA. Lo! where all trembling, I have knelt and pray'd;
Where vow and sacrifice, at morn and eve,
Shrouded in incense din, have risen to appease
The wrath, great Jove, of thy once dreaded thunder,—
Up to the might of thy majestic brows,
Yet terrible with anger, thus I utter,—
I am no longer worshipper of thine!
Witness the firm farewell these steadfast eyes
For ever 'grave upon thy marble front;
Witness these hands—their trembling is not fear—
That on thine altar set for evermore
A firm renouncing seal—I am a Christian!
Where are thy lightnings?—where thine awful thunder?
Melted from out thy grasp by love and peace!

* * * *

The shadows blacken, and the altar flame
Troubles them into motion. God of stone,
For the last time, farewell!

Vivia Perpetua, Act II., Sc. 4.

The character of Vivia Perpetua in the hands of her regenerator from the honoured dust of by-gone ages, stands dramatically entire and intact; but she has also by suggestion a spiritual connection with all those who, in any age, struggle towards the light, proclaiming the truth that is in them, and suffer with her a martyrdom in the scorn and injuries of the world. It is a poem for the future, as well as the past. It is a great subject, worthily executed, although it would probably bear considerable abbreviation.

Mr. Taylor's acquaintance with the poetry of his time appears to be either very limited, or else we must understand him to denounce all poetry except that which is adapted to his own peculiar nature and taste. He actually concludes his observations on Lord Byron, which are sufficiently disparaging, by the following statement:—"Nor can it be said that anything better, or indeed *anything half so good*, has been subsequently produced. The poetry of the day, whilst it is *greatly inferior* in quality, continues to be *like his in kind*!" And this, with Alfred Pennyson alive in the world, at whom, indeed, the rest of the paragraph seems to point directly.

We would also commend to Mr. Taylor's discomposed attention, the poems of "Paracelsus" and of "Festus," were it only that he might endeavour to discover the likeness to Lord Byron. They are as unlike, by the presence of the finer qualities of imagina-

tion, as "Philip van Arteveld" is unlike by the absence of passion.

Whatever greatness has originated in Wordsworth's mind from his habit of refusing "to share any glory with his subject" by the systematic selection of things devoid of much obvious interest in themselves, and, as he often declares, on account of their meanness, to the eye, or to the general impressions of mankind, it is much to be doubted if the adoption of this principle *by others* will not lead them downwards in the scale of enthusiasm. It may tend to throw them exclusively upon their individualities, which may not inaptly be represented by a paraphrase of a well-known couplet,—

"My Thought is great because the object's mean :
Then 'twould be greater were no object seen."

We are fully aware how open every argument of this kind will be to misrepresentation. Nevertheless we shall speak it out, and trust to having justice in the long run. It is such poems as Wordsworth's "Laodamia,"—the scriptural grandeur of simplicity in "Michael,"—the high-wrought fervour of his immortal "Ode," and not his illustrations of "the meanest objects," that all lovers of poetry so deeply admire, and that his disciples should regard as stars to guide them.

It is much to be lamented by all those who are seriously interested in works of art, that the power of conception should by no means necessarily include the power of design and construction, nor do even these always insure a worthily executive hand. A singular example of great capacities in execution with a deplorable inability to build up a fabric, was exhibited some few years since, in a half-epic, half-lyrical poem, privately circulated, entitled, "Ernest, or Political Regeneration," which was reviewed in one of the leading quarterlies, we forget which. A passage from it will be of good application to some remarks previously made with reference to the inseparable nature of Imagination from all poems of large scope, and from poetry itself, which is a radiant Passion no less than an art:—

"The glorious sun, that sate alone
While yet creation was a child ;
Is sovereign still upon his throne !
Undimmed, undarkened, undefiled,
They watch and wheel, those mighty spheres,
Still rushing round him at his will ;
Through boundless space and countless years,

And he doth list their music still.
And ever onward as they roll,
He cheers them with his quickening ray."

Ernest, p. 250.

Of the subject of "Festus," we have already spoken. The build of its design is so obviously taken from Goethe's "Faust," whatever differences may also exist, that we can but regard it as so far unworthy of the striking originality of the materials of passion, thought, and imagination, comprised in its structure. The execution breathes throughout a fulness of power. That the work often runs wild, is admissible; and besides redundancies, it also has many violations of taste.

But, however great a conception may be, however splendid the imagination, the modern artist can never be too earnestly exhorted to think well of his design, and the construction in all its parts. Why should he fail, as so many do, in these things? Let us endeavour, in a few concluding words, to make our meaning clear to all whom it may concern.

There burns in the elements of certain natures, in the secret wells of their being, the deep sources where dwelleth the soul, a yearning towards some vaster region than the world which surrounds them, and an aspiration which would cleave its crystalline walls and soar away towards illimitable heavens, unknown ecstasies, and the eternal mysteries of Divinity. They feel this yearning, this aspiration, communicating itself to the very temperature and current of their blood; it stings them to the quick of inward being; it breaks out in drops upon the forehead, and rills down this poor inadequate, corporeal frame. They have mighty thoughts and deep; the deep thoughts often cross each other, and re-cross in their tumultuous lights and shades, till the man is vanquished by the over-forces of his own mind: they see mighty phantasies and shapes; and the vision and the image rule over the man. Does he dream? No, he wakes; he has awakened to more things than his fellows. Is he mad, or of intellect unsound? Not so; for he sees clearly and knows that his mystery is but some excess in the common mystery of all life, and that he is but a troubled human creature; a frame-work troubled by some rebounding and imprisoned spirit within, that seeks for freedom in the illimitable air and in the illimitable light, not as a mere wild voyage to regions where he would

be altogether strange and confounded, but as though by a sense of birth-right in these intolerable desires. But Time moves on—the wheels of the years pass over the head and face turned star-ward,—and the man finds that he will assuredly be, some day, old. He is but where he was when he first commenced this upward-looking, these aspirations to infinity. His thoughts now slowly recoil and revolve inwardly, and his visions gather closer round him. He seeks a sublime result for that within, which is denied to him from without. He places the images of his mind in order, even as a man before the death of his mortality arraigneth his house: and finally he is no longer vanquished by his thoughts, but fixes and rules over the vision and the dream. Here then he finds some solace for his yearnings; he no longer seeks to disperse himself, but to collect; no longer to revel in the arms of bright and unattainable desires, but to build. And the condition of this man's mind is that of Creative Passion.

But to the store-house of the world, and to the things of worth for man's largest use and benefit, his soul's sake and body's sake, of what value is this creative passion? Can it take us up into the blessed air beside it, or help us to ride with it triumphant upon the triumphant winds? Or can it come down to us on earth, and if so, with what benefit to those who need help? How shall we perceive and feel it? How know it, how take it to heart and use it, as an incentive to hope, a refuge for sorrow, or an influence to elevate, and a medium to bring good tidings to mankind? Of what value to us shall be a palace of mighty voices, and echoes from mightier worlds, if we have no fair entrance porch, or if, having entered, we cannot distinguish the passages and step-flights from the pillars and the walls, nor the right shape of anything, nor the clear interpretation of any voice or echo?

Out of these wild imaginations, these ungoverned and formless phantasies, these outrages to common sense, which heated brains call genius or inspiration, we must seek to free ourselves. Should we not call in the aid of calm reason? Must we not command all these passionate emotions and imaginings by erecting a glacier in the midst, at the summit of which Sound Sense shall sit upon his judgment throne?

There sits Sound Sense upon his throne! He is at

the same altitude as those fantastic dreams and fiery emotions which he is to govern. Yet a little while he sits; not haughtily, but with a sober pride. And behold!—his throne is sinking—it surely is sinking!—the crowned Perfection is sinking lower and lower—the glacier is dissolving at the base—the passions are cruelly hot—the summit of his glacier has now dropt flat—his grave long face gapes wide, and out of that widening dismay a grey mist issues, amidst which that very miscalculating presumption is diffused and lost.

Are we again upon earth? We are safely there, though the descending mist is there also. Nay, but Sound Sense is a good thing when upon earth. Let us all be reconciled. For out of the mist we now see a man emerge—an actual, living piece of humanity. He is a Working Man and may help us in this matter.

He hath a rough beard, and a strong, well-knit, supple body; a large organic forehead, and a steady eye. In one hand he holds a chisel, in the other a lump of clay. A modeller and a mason, a designer and a builder is this working man. He would speak to us. Shall we hear him? Or shall he be dumb, and go on with his own work? Will the Spirit of the Age listen to an unknown, unlaurelled labourer? Well,—let him say what he thinks.

"The first thing for the making of a house is the definite impulse to have a house made. The second thing is to have imagination to conceive of the design. And the third thing is to have a good workman's hand."

All this is common, plain-spoken stuff which every body knew before. Why should a man who makes things, presume to tell us how things are made? But let him proceed for the chance of something better.

"The definite impulse is a passion for that thing; the imagination is the power to think the shape; and the hand is the power to make the shape of the thought. You must listen, or depart. For now I will go on. The passion of the heart commands the passion of the brain, when the heart is of the right strength as meant by God for a natural, true man; and in those heart-felt emotions doth God's voice speak—the only inspiration of genius, because a revelation from the Infinite Maker to the finite maker who devoutly conceives these things, and aspires to make them manifest to his brothers of the earth. If a man have no passion he can

have no true impulse to create any thing. If he have passion, what he designs will then be in accordance and proportion with what he imagines; and lastly, what he imagines can only receive due form and be intelligible to fitting eyes, by mastery of hand."

"This shapeless lump of clay, so unsightly, so cold, and unsuggestive, is the type of all substance whereon no work has been done. Breathe fire into it—give to it a soul, and it shall have high capacities; set an artist's hand to work upon it, and it may have an angel's form. All the great imaginings, all the splendid visions that spring up in the mind, or can be created by voluntary power, will exercise no good influence in the world, nor have a long date, unless they be wrought upon a clear design, and are built up into a suitable structure. Nay, thoughts themselves, howsoever lofty or profound, must have intelligible form. The spirit of philosophy and of art, may comprehend the abstractions, and the germinating ideas as they exist in the work-places of the brain; but even these practised spirits understand the things better when they have acquired some definite shape, visible within, if not without; while for the use and benefit of mankind at large no labour is available that hath not intelligible form."

"As generations advance in civilization and refinement, a polish comes over the surface of nature, so that an artist that works with a light hand, shall find his tool's edge turned, and his labours produce no effect. In these days the people need power. They talk of knowledge, but must first be made to feel truth, and desire it. Among the relics of ancient Egypt there is a colossal granite Fist; sole memory of a forgotten god. Four thousand years have those granite fingers been held close. They did their work—and were locked up. It was that power which reared the pyramids—which gave them their structure, their form, and their eternity. They could not have lasted as rude shapeless heaps. They could not have endured the elements; man could not have borne the sight of them. Imagine that mighty fragment of a limb to open out into a Hand! A good change has come among some nations, and will gradually develope itself through all nations,—the change of feeling and conviction in the estimate of power. True power is now seen to arise from the nobler passions of the heart and of the intellect. Use, then, that

mighty open Hand with moral aim, and build for truth a lofty fabric."

"Nothing will now be received which has not some distinct principle, a clear design, a shapely structure. Characters, passions, thought, action and event, must all be within a circle and citadel of their own, bounded by no hard line of horizon, and opening large portals on all sides to the influences and sympathies of the outer world. The only artist-work that does good in its day, or that reaches posterity, is the work of a Soul that gives Form. But without the impassioned life of that soul, the best-reasoned form and structure are but cold vanities, which leave man's untired nature just where they found it, and therefore are of no service on earth."

THE END.



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